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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **DISSERTATION**

**KU KLUX RISING:  
TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN RIGHT  
WING TERRORIST CAMPAIGNS**

by

Paul D. Brister

September 2011

Dissertation Supervisor:

Maria Rasmussen

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**KU KLUX RISING:  
TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAN  
RIGHT WING TERRORIST CAMPAIGNS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SECURITY STUDIES**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since 1866, the Ku Klux Klan has been able to muster three distinctive and sustained campaigns of terrorism, commonly referred to as the three “waves” of Klan violence. The first occurred between 1866 and 1871, the second between 1915 and 1928, and the third from roughly 1954 to the mid-1960s. Subsequent to the third wave, the Klan unsuccessfully attempted another resurgence in the mid-1970s/early 1980s but was snuffed out before a campaign could be triggered. By studying the three most successful Klan campaigns of the past (granting that each varied in scope, intensity and outcome) alongside the failed campaign attempt of the 1970–1980s, this dissertation will investigate which commonly cited factors and conditions were, in fact, associated with the rise of the KKK’s campaigns of terrorism.

Ultimately, the dissertation finds that four factors—the presence of a safe haven, organizational structure, leadership, and recruitment techniques—are necessary and jointly sufficient to explain Klan campaign emergence. By combining these factors in a manner which better reflects their interplay, a model offering greater explanatory value emerges. The first significant set of correlates is the presence or absence of safe havens and their relation to the organizational structure chosen by Klan leadership. The second set of correlates is the ability of the Klan to downplay its core ideology and effectively frame a recruitment message which resonates with a pre-existing dominant social narrative—a narrative usually based on mythologized history or an unfalsifiable belief system. As will be explained in concluding chapters, the probabilistic model that emerges when these factors combine proves more effective in explaining and predicting campaigns of Klan terrorism than simply listing these factors as if they are not consciously combined for effect.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
A.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF DISSERTATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
B.	<b>CASE SELECTION.....</b>	<b>11</b>
C.	<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>14</b>
D.	<b>STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CHAPTER II.</b>	<b>DEFINING, UNDERSTANDING, AND REVIEWING PREVALENT THEORIES OF RIGHT WING TERRORISM.....</b>	<b>21</b>
A.	<b>THEORIES OF TERRORISM .....</b>	<b>31</b>
1.	<b>Individual Approaches .....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.	<b>Structural Approaches .....</b>	<b>38</b>
3.	<b>Sponsorship Approaches.....</b>	<b>47</b>
4.	<b>Organizational Approaches .....</b>	<b>52</b>
B.	<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>CHAPTER III:</b>	<b>DEO VINDICE—THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA KLAN .....</b>	<b>57</b>
A.	<b>HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.....</b>	<b>58</b>
B.	<b>STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>71</b>
C.	<b>SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>77</b>
D.	<b>ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS.....</b>	<b>81</b>
E.	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>CHAPTER IV:</b>	<b>HISTORY WITH LIGHTNING—THE JAZZ ERA KLAN .....</b>	<b>89</b>
A.	<b>HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.....</b>	<b>91</b>
B.	<b>STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>107</b>
C.	<b>SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>113</b>
D.	<b>ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS.....</b>	<b>116</b>
E.	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>CHAPTER V:</b>	<b>WELCOME TO BOMBINGHAM—THE CIVIL-RIGHTS ERA KLAN.....</b>	<b>123</b>
A.	<b>HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.....</b>	<b>125</b>
B.	<b>STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>141</b>
C.	<b>SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>144</b>
D.	<b>ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS.....</b>	<b>148</b>
E.	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>CHAPTER VI.</b>	<b>ENEMY OF THE STATE—MARGINALIZATION OF THE KLAN AND RISE OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOTS.....</b>	<b>155</b>
A.	<b>HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.....</b>	<b>155</b>
B.	<b>STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>168</b>
C.	<b>SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS .....</b>	<b>171</b>
D.	<b>ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS.....</b>	<b>174</b>
E.	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>CHAPTER VII.</b>	<b>RESULTS—A COMPARISON OF KU KLUX TERRORISM..</b>	<b>179</b>

A.	RESULTS OF ANALYSIS.....	180
1.	Structural Factors Systematically Reviewed.....	182
2.	Sponsorship Factors Systematically Reviewed .....	189
3.	Organizational Factors Systematically Reviewed.....	191
B.	CONCLUSION .....	193
CHAPTER VIII.	THE ARGUMENT .....	195
A.	TRIGGER POINTS FOR CAMPAIGNS OF TERRORISM .....	195
B.	EXPLAINING CAMPAIGNS OF KLAN TERRORISM .....	198
1.	The Relationship Between Organizational Structure and Safe Havens.....	201
2.	The Power of Effective Framing.....	209
a.	<i>Getting the Word Out: Klan Message Dissemination.....</i>	213
b.	<i>The Role of Intellectuals: Enhancers of Klan Terrorism ..</i>	214
3.	Leaders as Lynchpins .....	220
a.	<i>The Two Critical Decision Points.....</i>	221
b.	<i>The Role of Charisma .....</i>	223
C.	SUMMARY .....	227
CHAPTER IX:	POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	229
A.	IT TAKES A NETWORK TO PREVENT A HIERARCHY .....	231
B.	GROUP SIZE MATTERS .....	234
C.	THE LIMITS OF LEADERLESS RESISTANCE .....	235
1.	Fine Tuning “The War of Ideas”.....	239
D.	EXPANDING THE COUNTERTERRORISM MARKET .....	242
E.	OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....	243
F.	CONCLUSIONS .....	248
LIST OF REFERENCES .....		251
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....		275

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	The Pathway to Terrorism Campaigns .....	201
Figure 2.	The Pathway to Terrorism Campaigns (2nd Stage).....	208
Figure 3.	The Two Leadership Decision Points .....	221

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**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Approaches to Understanding Terrorism.....33

Table 2. Findings from Broad Analysis .....181

Table 3. Findings of Systematic Review .....182

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ADL—Anti-Defamation League

BOK—Brotherhood of Klans

CI—Christian Identity

COINTELPRO—Counter-Intelligence Program

COFO—Council of Federated Organizations

CORE—Congress of Racial Equality

DHS—Department of Homeland Security

FBI—Federal Bureau of Investigation

IEKKKK—Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

KKK—Ku Klux Klan

NGO—Nongovernmental Organization

SCLC—Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SMT—Social Movement Theory

SPLC—Southern Poverty Law Center

UKA—United Klans of America

UN—United Nations

WAR—White Aryan Resistance

WKKKKM—White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the Sovereign Realm of  
Mississippi

WMD—Weapons of Mass Destruction



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*No matter how hard you try to be what you once were, you can only be what you are here and now...you're in the present, you're trapped in a young now or an old now, but there is no other now to be seen. –Ray Bradbury*

I would first like to thank my family for their support and understanding. To my dissertation committee, Maria Rasmussen, Jeff Knopf, Anna Simons, Maiah Jaskoski and Douglas Porch, thank you for all of your mentorship, guidance, and meticulous feedback. I was told early on that the PhD process is an exercise in humility (or should be). I was told that a true scholar should emerge from the process with an appreciation of how much more remained to be learned.

From my mentors I've learned that the highest compliment is for other scholars to apply the label of "student of the discipline." True scholars, they said, cringe being labeled an expert. I see now that this path never culminates but is instead an infinite process that both broadens and deepens ones understanding of the world. This is the motivation of the true scholar. A heartfelt thank you to those who demonstrated this concept through action. You know who you are.

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

*Yesterday, Today, Forever,  
Since Eighteen Hundred and Sixty Six, the KU KLUX KLAN has been riding and  
will continue to do so as long as the WHITE MAN LIVETH.<sup>1</sup>*

### 1860s

*The Ku Klux Klan is so extensive, and so well organized and armed, that it is  
beyond the power of any one to exert any moral influences over them. Powder and ball is  
the only thing that will put them down.<sup>2</sup>*

### 1920s

*Outside business, the Ku Klux Klan has become the most vigorous, active, and  
effective organization in American life.<sup>3</sup>*

### 1960s

*Klan involvement in kidnappings and beatings, arson, bombings, and outright  
murder in recent years compels the committee to view a klan as a vehicle for death,  
destruction, and fear.<sup>4</sup>*

### 1980s

*Perhaps the most telling commentary of the Ku Klux Klan's status as the last  
decade of the twentieth century began to unfold was that other, more radical white  
supremacists had begun to ridicule it openly.<sup>5</sup>*

In the years following the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, race-based hate groups experienced a dramatic and steady resurgence.<sup>6</sup> Within a decade of the bombing, the number of racial hate groups—including Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazi, Racist Skinhead, and

---

<sup>1</sup> As quoted in: David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham:Duke University Press, 1987), 438.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in R. Millett & Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense* (New York:The Free Press, 1994), 260.

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in: Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York:Oxford University Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>4</sup> United States. Congress. House. Committee on Un-American Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session* (Washington,U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1967), 136.

<sup>5</sup> Bill Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 1st ed. (New York: Weidenfeld, 1991), 266.

<sup>6</sup> Claims of resurgence are based on the number of groups, not necessarily in the amount of terrorist activity.

Neo-Confederate organizations—exploded from 241 in 1996 to over 750 by 2006.<sup>7</sup> Given America’s near-exclusive fascination with Islamic terrorist groups, this dangerous trend has gone largely unnoticed by the citizenry and, due to political reasons, goes woefully underreported by government institutions. In 2009, a leaked report from the Department of Homeland Security briefly brought the issue of non-Islamic domestic terrorism back to the forefront of American concerns, only to be immediately swept aside by politicians who claimed the report was an attack on conservatives and veterans.<sup>8</sup> By early 2010, the DHS section responsible for producing the report was gutted and all links to the report were removed from government websites.<sup>9</sup> The report generated more political turmoil than neutral analysis and the report has yet to be either considered or challenged on its merits. To those versed in the history of American domestic terrorism, the report harkens back to multiple dark periods of America’s past.

The factors upon which the report draws—economic downturns, the influx of returning military veterans, and the presence or introduction of “left wing” policies and organizations—have long been used to predict terrorism from the right, but are rarely subjected to the types of cross-case analysis needed to determine causality. In addition to the structural explanations for terrorism and extremism cited in the DHS report, this dissertation will also test organizational and sponsorship theories that are widely employed in the field of terrorism studies. The goal of this dissertation is to examine how useful these three theoretical lenses are for explaining America’s most intense campaigns of right wing terrorism.

---

<sup>7</sup> Stuart A. Wright, “Strategic Framing of Racial-Nationalism in North America and Europe: An Analysis of a Burgeoning Transnational Network,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 2 (2009): 192.

<sup>8</sup> DHS Report on Rightwing Extremism. *Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment*. Available from [http://www.docstoc.com/docs/5410658/DHS-Report-on-Right wing-Extremism](http://www.docstoc.com/docs/5410658/DHS-Report-on-Right-wing-Extremism); Accessed 05 June 2009. Newt Gingrich reacts to this document in: Jake Tapper, “Conservatives Decry Homeland Security Report on “Rightwing” Extremism,” *ABC News.com* 2009. Accessed 18 July 2011, <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2009/04/conservatives-d.html>.

<sup>9</sup> SPLC News, “Inside the D.H.S. : Former Top Analyst Says Agency Bowed to Political Pressure,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed 07 June 2011, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/news/inside-the-dhs-former-top-analyst-says-agency-bowed-to-political-pressure>.

Right wing extremism—and the terrorism that frequently accompanies it—is nothing new to the American political landscape.<sup>10</sup> Right wing violence is as old as the country itself and is virtually guaranteed to remain a factor for the duration of American existence. From as early as 1780, militant organizations were created to protect America from the supposed evil machinations of the Bavarian Illuminati and other related secret enterprises bent on world domination.<sup>11</sup> Concerns about American men becoming “disciples of Voltaire” and American women the “concubines of the Illuminati” spread throughout the fledgling country with alarming speed and strength.<sup>12</sup> The 1797 book *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies* caught hold in the United States and, soon thereafter, Americans were convinced of a triple Illuminati/Mason/Intellectual conspiracy to destroy religion and public order.<sup>13</sup>

In response, so-called “pure American societies” were organized to root out the spread of immorality by these enlightened European sinners and return America to what was deemed its proper, morally superior position in the world. Organizations such as the Anti-Masons, Know-Nothings, and Native Americans would promote themselves as patriotic defenders of American values as prescribed primarily by the Protestant church. These groups directed a full-scale war against the conspiratorial undertakings of the

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<sup>10</sup> For narratives on the history of right wing movements see: Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860; a Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York,: Rinehart, 1952); David Harry Bennett, *The Party of Fear : From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason : Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 2d ed., A Phoenix Book P75 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays*, 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); John H. Bunzel, *Anti-Politics in America; Reflections on the Anti-Political Temper and Its Distortions of the Democratic Process*, [1st ed. (New York,: Knopf, 1967); Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *Danger on the Right* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976); Carleton Beals, *Brass-Knuckle Crusade; the Great Know-Nothing Conspiracy, 1820-1860* (New York,: Hastings House, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> Even today, the Bavarian Illuminati remains central to many of the right wing extremist conspiracy theories. The Illuminati was an organization developed in the late 1700s that advocated reason over religion in solving societal problems. Many right wing conspiracy theorists credit the Illuminati as the driving force behind the French Revolution, while others insist that the Illuminati, in conjunction with Jewish power holders, are now manipulating world politics through an entity they refer to as the ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government). It is not uncommon for the Illuminati, the Freemasons, immigrants, and Jews to be used interchangeably in right wing extremist discussions concerning the world’s ills.

<sup>12</sup> Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason : Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 36.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Catholics, Masons, Illuminati, immigrants, and anyone deemed un-American. Even prior to the Civil War, “murderous battles were marked by barricades of carts and hurled paving stones, assaults with knives, brickbats, bludgeons, teeth, and fists.”<sup>14</sup> Violence was further fueled by stories of Catholic priests kidnapping young American women and killing the infants born of sadistic sexual acts. Books “proving” such tales became best-sellers throughout the United States.<sup>15</sup> Although right wing groups were numerous during the early 1800s, none were able to sustain their existence for any considerable amount of time. This would change in the aftermath of the Civil War with the birth of an organization that would become the epitome for domestic right wing terrorism for over a century thereafter.

Whereas antebellum America produced several flash-in-the-pan extremist organizations, the post-Civil War era gave rise to an organization capable of weathering over one hundred and forty years of societal changes. In 1866, six young Confederate veterans “hungering and thirsting for amusement” created what would become one of the most formidable politico-terrorist organizations in American history.<sup>16</sup> Adhering to traditional Greek methods of naming social clubs—in particular the fraternity Kuklos Adelphon or “old Kappa Alpha”—the group of men dubbed their organization the Ku Klux Klan, and reveled in “its novelty, its alliterative content, and its uncertain meaning.”<sup>17</sup> The Ku Klux Klan, originally designed to be nothing more than a quirky social club aimed at overcoming the unyielding boredom of small-town life, would quickly and unexpectedly transform itself into an organization capable of systematically weaving together acts of terrorism into sustainable campaigns. Responding to societal issues of the day—be they perceived assaults on Southern institutions or transgressions against the sanctity of white womanhood, serving to defend Americanism or acting as a bulwark against school segregation—and offering cleverly crafted ideas about how to

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<sup>14</sup> Bennett, *The Party of Fear : From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*, 38.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, see: Maria Monk et al., *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk : As Exhibited in a Narrative of Her Sufferings During a Residence of Five Years as a Novice, and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal* (New York: Howe & Bates, 1836).

<sup>16</sup> Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, [1st ed. (New York,: Harper & Row, 1971), 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

rally supporters, the Klan would soon become a right wing terrorist organization par excellence, capable of spurring Americans to violence for over a century.

Since 1866, the Ku Klux Klan has been able to muster three distinctive and sustained campaigns of terrorism, commonly referred to as the three “waves” of Klan violence. The first occurred between 1866 and 1871, the second between 1915 and 1928, and the third from roughly 1954 to the mid-1960s. Klan activity continued in one form or another in the years between these waves, but did not achieve a similar ongoing pattern of organized and sustained violence. Subsequent to the third wave, the Klan unsuccessfully attempted another resurgence in the mid-1970s/early 1980s but was snuffed out before a campaign could be triggered. Today, the Klan remains a marginalized entity within a highly atomized brew of competing right wing extremist organizations. By studying the three most successful Klan campaigns of the past (granting that each varied in scope, intensity and outcome) alongside the failed campaign attempt of the 1970–1980s, this dissertation will investigate which commonly cited factors and conditions were, in fact, associated with the rise of the KKK’s campaigns of terrorism.

The intensity and duration of successful Klan campaigns have varied. During its existence, the Klan has spearheaded a successful insurgency (1860s), gained political power that reached the highest levels of government (1920s), and—most recently—suffered setbacks that may permanently constrain the organization from rising to such heights again (post 1960). Despite its white supremacist ideology, the Klan has also demonstrated remarkable flexibility in marketing, recruitment, networking, and organizational design. Framing itself and its organizational aims in a variety of manners (and sometimes even in contradictory ways), the Ku Klux Klan has shown tremendous resilience and an innate ability to appeal to a large swath of the American population.

This dissertation seeks to answer two fundamental questions: Does one of the theoretical approaches in the field of terrorism studies prove adequate in explaining surges of Klan terrorism? And, if not, is there a combination from among these approaches that yields a better understanding of Klan violence? One impetus for this dissertation is the belief that a better understanding of terrorism in the past can assist in

preventing terrorism in the future. By understanding the nature of the Ku Klux Klan's terrorism campaigns, by extension, we should better understand the trajectory of contemporary right wing terrorism. With such understanding, it should be possible to highlight policy choices that minimize the success of any future domestic terrorist campaigns.

Before going further, it must be emphasized that this dissertation does not purport to explain individual or isolated incidents of Klan terrorism; a certain level of racist violence has unfortunately been a continuing feature of American society. Instead, this dissertation seeks to explain and understand *campaigns* of Klan terrorism. This is more than a nuanced distinction. Terrorism will never be completely eradicated.<sup>18</sup> Terrorism is a tactic that has been used since ancient times and will continue to be used for the duration of human existence. Although it will never be fully eliminated, it may be possible to prevent organizations from stringing together acts of terrorism into a sustained campaign, the concern of this dissertation. Preventing campaigns is important as a way to reduce the total amount of violence and keep terrorist organizations from achieving their objectives.

Terrorist campaigns are routinely mentioned throughout the literature, but hardly, if ever, actually defined.<sup>19</sup> Providing such a definition on which to build is the first contribution of this dissertation. From a military perspective, a campaign is defined as “a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a military strategic or operational objective within a given time and space.”<sup>20</sup> Adapting this definition, a

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<sup>18</sup> As explained in detail in Chapter II, terrorism is defined as *the systematic use or threatened use of violence, directed against targets chosen for their symbolic or representative value, as a means of instilling anxiety in, transmitting one or more messages to, or altering the behavior of a wider target audience.*

<sup>19</sup> For seminal works in terrorism studies which rely on the concept of a terrorist campaign without actually defining it, see: Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends : Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Martha Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God : The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd ed., Comparative Studies in Religion and Society 13 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Walter Laqueur, *No End to War : Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003). Christopher Hewitt, *The Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorist Policies* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).; Robert Anthony Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Random House Trade Paperback ed. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> United States Department of Defense, “Joint Publication 3-0: Chapter 4 Planning, Operational Art and Design and Assessment,” ed. Joint Chiefs of Staff (Washington, DC : 2006).



terrorist campaign will be defined as *a series of systematic terrorist attacks aimed at accomplishing a specific objective within a given time and space*. The objectives of the Klan have changed dramatically over time: the overthrow of Republican government during the 1860s; maintenance of a nebulous “100% American” concept during the 1920s; and opposition to desegregation efforts during the 1960s. In order to send its message, the Klan targeted specific groups of people in hopes of achieving these goals: supporters of the Republican Party in the 1860s; bootleggers, Catholics, and perceived communists during the 1920s; and those who promoted Civil Rights during the 1960s. In one study—the 1860s—ways and means were aligned effectively, resulting in the eventual attainment of Klan strategic ends. For the vast majority of its life, however, the Klan has been unable to achieve its goals through the use of terrorism. For over 80% of its life, the Klan has generated only small amounts of localized violence, but at other times, it has expanded the scope and scale of its terrorism. The Klan almost universally falls short of goal achievement, but it has nonetheless been able to surge and sustain a series of terrorist acts aimed at accomplishing a specific objective—or, put more simply, to wage a terrorist campaign. To further refine the scope of this study, only consecutive years in which ten or more documented acts of Klan terrorism occurred are considered. Additionally, as we are concerned with threats to national security, only periods in which the Klan was able to generate and sustain enough terrorism to generate a national response (either in terms of deployment of federal soldiers, or condemnation by national leaders) will the case be considered a campaign.

It must also be kept in mind that this dissertation acknowledges the fact that there have always been peaks and lulls in racial tensions which result in sporadic outbreaks of violence. This violence is usually constrained locally or regionally, and unless under the direction of an organization, has no stated political end. At times, however, the Klan has taken advantage of societal unrest to generate sustained terrorist campaigns. This has given the Klan the opportunity to take the normally localized violence and translate it into a program which generates national effects, which have in turn elicited a dedicated counter-campaign. It is here—where the Klan has been able to generate systematic terrorist activity on a regional or national scale, and for extended periods of time—that

this dissertation focuses. This is not to say that at the start of each campaign the Klan had a theory of victory. Each of the campaigns studied in this dissertation had its trigger points and its objectives. However, this dissertation does not claim that the repertoire of Klan terrorism was the result of a rational calculation of means and ends. Rather, this dissertation implicitly argues that the violent output of a terrorist organization may start with concrete political objectives, but quickly becomes influenced by a host of other factors.<sup>21</sup> Psychological pressures, the need for revenge, survivor guilt, political infighting among factions within the group, even an abundance of resources, have all been cited as factors which influence and in some cases determine the actions of terrorist groups. As Jerrold Post once humorously quipped, “the cause is not the cause.”<sup>22</sup>

Scholars and political leaders alike have sought explanations for how campaigns of terrorism emerge. Some approaches point to structural variables—a depressed economy, the presence of a left wing opponent, or the return of veterans from wars—while others focus on the support given to terrorist organizations by sympathetic states or political parties. Many advocate the need to treat the terrorist group as a rational actor, driven by specific decision-making processes and affected by the choices the group makes within a specific environment. By systematically comparing four cases—three campaigns and one negative case—according to the logic of Mill’s Methods of Agreement and Difference, the study rules out some existing causal explanations for Ku Klux terrorism; the study’s second contribution to the literature. This dissertation’s third contribution to the existing literature is to develop a new theory for explaining Klan terrorism. Specifically, the study uses the comparisons to ascertain what factors were necessary in enabling the Klan to coordinate sustained terrorist campaigns and how those factors interact with one another to achieve joint sufficiency. Necessity will be determined via cross-case comparison using the logic of Mill’s Methods.<sup>23</sup> Factors

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<sup>21</sup> The classic discussion of instrumental (strategic) versus organizational views of terrorism is Martha Crenshaw, “Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches,” in David C. Rapoport (ed.), *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Jerrold M. Post, “Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces,” in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 35.

<sup>23</sup> Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 355-66.

determined to be necessary to explain Klan terrorist campaigns will be further scrutinized to determine joint sufficiency and to identify the mechanisms by which the necessary conditions combine to produce campaigns.

Ultimately the dissertation finds that four factors—the presence of a safe haven, organizational structure, leadership, and recruitment techniques—are necessary and jointly sufficient to explain Klan campaign emergence. By combining these factors in a manner which better reflects their interplay, a model offering greater explanatory value emerges. The first significant set of correlates is the presence or absence of safe havens and their relation to the organizational structure chosen by Klan leadership. The second set of correlates is the ability of the Klan to downplay its core ideology and effectively frame a recruitment message which resonates with a pre-existing dominant social narrative—a narrative usually based on mythologized history or an unfalsifiable belief system. As will be explained in Chapter 8, the probabilistic model that emerges when these factors combines proves more effective in explaining and predicting campaigns of Klan terrorism than simply listing these factors as if they are not consciously combined for effect.

## **A. SIGNIFICANCE OF DISSERTATION**

This dissertation aims to provide readers a better understanding of Ku Klux Klan terrorism as a way to shed light on the actual threat posed by contemporary right wing terrorist organizations. Armed with more accurate analytic tools, scholars and policy makers should be better able to address the contemporary threats arrayed against the American government and society.

For example, is it possible, in a country led by a liberal, mixed-race President governing amidst a global economic recession, that right wing terrorist organizations won't resort to terrorism? Are the values of 21<sup>st</sup> century America different enough from those of earlier generations to constrain the rise of right wing extremist movements? Do the organization and ideology of modern right wing extremist organizations self limit future recruitment, or have these groups adapted enough to be able to broaden their appeal to a contemporary population? Lastly, considering the recent downfall and marginalization of the Ku Klux Klan within the radical right, what conclusions can be

reached about the state's ability to confront and constrain domestic terrorism? Drawing on the example of the Ku Klux Klan phenomenon—the epitome of right wing terrorist organizations—this study attempts to shed light on these questions.

The dissertation aims for relevance in both the realms of academia and counter terrorism policy. From a scholarly perspective, this project breaks ground in at least two ways. Most prominently, it is the first attempt to craft a model capable of explaining the “three waves” of Ku Klux Klan terrorism. Many works have documented a specific wave of Ku Klux violence, while others have provided a broad historical narrative of Klan existence, but none has systematically compared the distinct waves with an eye to elucidating theory.

Another scholarly aim of this study is to test theories found within terrorism studies. Most works in the field focus almost exclusively on one of four dominant theoretical perspectives. This dissertation will systematically compare three of these approaches to determine the relative weight each holds in predicting and explaining Klan terrorism. The fourth approach—which focuses on individual motivations—is discussed in the following chapter but not tested, because the objective here is to explain why an organization collectively decides to systematically employ terrorism.

From a practitioner's point of view, this research could prove both timely and useful should recent warnings of racial hate resurgence be true. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), recent political and social developments have led to “the most significant growth [of right wing extremism] we've seen in 10 to 12 years.”<sup>24</sup> A leaked report from the Department of Homeland Security supports this statement, adding that the return of disgruntled veterans, along with the military skills they possess, “have the potential to boost the capabilities of extremists to carry out

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<sup>24</sup> Larry Keller, “The Second Wave: Return of the Militias,” in *The Second Wave: Return of the Militias: A Special Report from the Southern Poverty Law Center* (Montgomery, AL: SPLC, August 2009), 7. The Southern Poverty Law Center is a non-governmental organization dedicated to tracking and exposing the activities of ‘hate groups.’ Founded in 1971 by lawyer Morris Dees, the SPLC proves to be an excellent source of information on recent right wing extremist movements. For a history of the SPLC see the opening chapters of: Morris Dees and James Corcoran, *Gathering Storm : America's Militia Threat*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996).

violence.”<sup>25</sup> In both reports, analysts emphasize the importance of environmental preconditions to support their claims of looming right wing resurgence. Unfortunately, no analysis thus far has commented on the organizational design and dynamics of the movement, the networks they are using to propagate it, the recruiting techniques and ideology used to attract others, or the resources available to these groups. Little has been said about the efforts and strategies of American law enforcement agencies or the significance of watchdog organizations like the SPLC or Anti-Defamation League (ADL). It is likely that, once such variables are considered, the approaches taken to combat the current strain of right wing extremism would be modified in several ways. The model built in this dissertation aspires to provide useful guidance to aid policy makers effectively allocate resources to curb domestic terrorism.

## **B. CASE SELECTION**

Readers of this study will undoubtedly ask “why study the Ku Klux Klan?” The Ku Klux Klan was chosen for a number of reasons. Among the most important is the Klan’s tremendous lifespan. For over one hundred and forty years, American society has experienced both peaks and lulls in Klan terrorist activity. Additionally, throughout this time, the Klan has altered its organizational design, shifted recruitment techniques, and operated during times when it attracted both social sympathy and outright hostility. The Klan has tried to be all things to all people and—with varying degrees of success—has offered violent remedies to cure the perceived ills of society. Amazingly, despite a white supremacist ideology at its core, the Klan has even managed to recruit African-Americans into its ranks. In short, this incredible lifespan provides the opportunity to test multiple theories about terrorism by focusing on a single organization. Given the relatively short life span of other terrorist organizations, this is a rare opportunity.

A focus on the Klan also proves interesting given the variations in its geographical reach and campaign intensity over four distinct periods of time. In the first period, the 1860s, the Klan waged a very intense campaign of terrorism, but achieved

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<sup>25</sup> DHS Report on Rightwing Extremism. *Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment*. Available from [http://www.docstoc.com/docs/5410658/DHS-Report-on-Right wing-Extremism](http://www.docstoc.com/docs/5410658/DHS-Report-on-Right-wing-Extremism); Accessed 05 June 2009.

influence only in southern states. In period number two, the 1920s Klan launched a campaign with nationwide reach. In contrast, the 1950–1960s reveals a period of limited campaign reach for the Klan, despite (or perhaps due to) more lethal weaponry and tactics. In the fourth period studied, the 1970–1980s, we see the absolute marginalization of the Klan during a period when, at least theoretically, it should have flourished. Given this wide differentiation across time, geographical space, and in levels of campaign violence we shall see certain recurrent variables.

The Ku Klux Klan is also a useful organization to study thanks to the voluminous literature that has been produced about it over the years.<sup>26</sup> This abundance is both a blessing and a curse, as authors range from those sympathetic to the Klan to those who despise it. There are those who view the Klan's activity as uncoordinated mob violence, a product of the social conditions of a given era. Others portray Klan authority "leading

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<sup>26</sup> For histories of the entire lifespan of the Klan see: Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*; Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2007). Sara Bullard, Southern Poverty Law Center., and Klanwatch Project., *The Ku Klux Klan : A History of Racism and Violence*, 4th ed. (Montgomery, Ala.: Klanwatch, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 1991). Robert P. Ingalls, *Hoods, the Story of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Putnam, 1979). For history of the 1860s Klan see: Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*; Stanley Fitzgerald Horn, *Invisible Empire; the Story of the Ku Klux Klan, 1866-1871* (Boston,: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939); John C. Lester, D. L. Wilson, and Ku Klux Klan (19th cent.). *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth, and Disbandment* (New York,: AMS Press, 1971). For the 1920s Klan see: MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*; David A. Horowitz and Ku Klux Klan (1915- ). La Grande Klan No. 14 (La Grande Or.), *Inside the Klavern : The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); John Moffatt Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind* (New York,: Harcourt, Brace and company, 1924); Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965); Patrick O'Donnell, ed. *Ku Klux Klan: America's First Terrorists Exposed*, vol. 1, Shadow History of the United States (West Orange, New Jersey: Idea Men Productions, 2006); Shawn Lay, *The Invisible Empire in the West : Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, 1st pbk. ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); United States Congress, *The Ku Klux Klan*, ed. First Session Sixty Seventh Congress, Hearings before the Committee on Rules (Washington DC: Government Print Office, 1921). For the 1950-1980s Klans see: James Graham Cook, *The Segregationists*, 1st ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962). Raphael S. Ezekiel, *The Racist Mind : Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen* (New York: Viking, 1995); John George and Laird M. Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe : Political Extremism in America* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1992); Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice. Activities., The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session.* Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right : The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, Rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

to one great center, with one common head who, in the interest of any political party, governed and directed the dreadful machine.”<sup>27</sup> The truth, undoubtedly, falls somewhere between these two extremes.

The primary point of dissention about the Klan’s organization and ability to coordinate activity revolve around the Reconstruction era. Those who wrote about the Ku Klux Klan between 1870 and 1910 tended to paint the Klan as a highly-coordinated entity, with every action controlled by a central authority. Later authors (writing during or immediately after the “third wave” Klan) took a different perspective, relying heavily upon the 1870-1871 Congressional investigation into the Ku Klux Klan. These authors dismissed the writings of earlier authors, asserting they were flawed and overly-sympathetic of the Klan. This ignored the fact that the *KKK Reports* produced by Congress were equally biased, written by Republican officials that despised everything about the Klan. Contemporary (post-1960) histories of the Reconstruction era Klan routinely fail to consider that the national hierarchy of the Klan had already largely disappeared by the time of the investigations, and what was left following this disbandment were (as the reports accurately capture) autonomous vigilante units clinging to the image of Forrest’s Klan. To navigate the conflicting currents in as neutral a manner as possible, primary source documents—from Klansmen, law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, political leaders, and private citizens are also used.

Finally, a focus on the Ku Klux Klan is relevant for policy reasons. The type of terrorism represented by the Klan has been responsible for some of the deadliest violence in U.S. history. Today, this form of terrorism remains a topic of great concern for counter terrorism policy analysts. Armed with a better understanding of this violence, policy makers will be better equipped to craft strategies to counter it. Although the choice to study this topic is partly driven by this normative consideration, the dissertation aims to treat the waves of Klan activity in an objective and clinical manner. While the

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<sup>27</sup> *The Nation's Peril. Twelve Years' Experience in the South. Then and Now. The Ku Klux Klan, a Complete Exposition of the Order: Its Purpose, Plans, Operations, Social and Political Significance; the Nation's Salvation* (New York,: Pub. by the friends of the compiler, 1872). For books, remove commas before parentheses.

author rejects the Klan's ideology, objective analysis demands the dissertation be devoid of moral evaluations and pejorative labels in order to better understand how the Klan has persisted (and occasionally thrived) over such a substantial length of time.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

This project differs from previous works on the Ku Klux Klan in that it systematically compares four different periods of time—three periods which represent campaigns of violent activity and one that does not. This will facilitate testing the most common explanations of right wing terrorism alongside one another. Numerous detailed histories have been written about the Klan, but none has performed a systematic comparison in an effort to explain why, where, and when the Klan was capable of stringing together terrorist violence into a sustained campaign. This dissertation seeks to fill that void.

This dissertation is a work of analysis, intended for a terrorism studies audience, rooted in the logic and methods of the political scientist, specifically utilizing comparative methodology. Stephen Van Evera submits that “dissertations in political science can serve seven principal missions.”<sup>28</sup> He delineates dissertation types as theory proposing, theory testing, literature assessing, policy prescriptive, historical explanatory, historical evaluative, and predictive. Van Evera further explains “most dissertations perform several of these missions, and are thus hybrids.”<sup>29</sup> This manuscript will fall among the realm of the hybrids by testing modern theories on the causes of terrorism, proposing modifications that better explain surges in Ku Klux violence, and recommending policy prescriptions to minimize the chances of future terrorist campaigns emerging. By Van Evera's definition, this thesis is therefore a theory testing, theory modifying, and policy prescriptive effort.

In order to achieve these aims, the dissertation will utilize a qualitative, structured-focused analysis of Klan activity. This approach is adopted for several reasons. Primarily—as numerous scholars observe—the field of terrorism studies has

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 89-93.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.



long been plagued by non-cumulative efforts resulting in knowledge “highly contestable and largely unsupported by empirical research.”<sup>30</sup> The inability to systematically compare and accumulate knowledge in studies of terrorism has caused at least one expert to lament “after 30 years of study, we simply should know more about terrorism than we currently do...that we continue to languish at this level of ignorance on such a serious subject is a cause of grave concern.”<sup>31</sup> The shortage of cumulative terrorism knowledge has resulted in the political acceptance of recycled, speculative half-truths and narrow theories which eventually form the foundation of (usually ineffective) counter terrorism policy.

In fairness to modern terrorism scholars, the post 9-11 explosion of terrorism-related works has pushed the field to correct deficiencies and has reinvigorated research on terrorism in general. As expected, the overwhelming majority of this work has focused on Islamic or Jihadi terrorism. The emphasis, unfortunately, has done little to promote cumulative knowledge or theory development about domestic right wing terrorism, especially terrorism from racially-motivated extremist groups like the Klan.

A structured, focused comparison should begin to rectify this problem. The approach taken here seeks to “guide and standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of the findings of the case possible.”<sup>32</sup> In short, the structured, focused approach was chosen in order to “draw the specific explanations of each case study into a broader, more generalized theory” and build a foundation that encourages cumulative future efforts.<sup>33</sup>

Although the study’s approach helps remedy the problem of non-accumulative knowledge, there are potential shortcomings to this methodology worth mentioning. Foremost amongst these is the issue of selection bias. If cases are not carefully screened and specifically selected, the findings of a study may grossly overstate the importance of

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Jackson, “The Core Commitments of Critical Terrorism Studies,” *European Political Science* 6(2007): 245.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Silke, “The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4 (2001): 13.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Bcsia Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

different variables examined within it. Concomitantly, there is a danger of generalizing the findings of a specific case study to phenomena that may not be related to the focus of the original study. In the field of terrorism studies, this is a common occurrence. For example, Marc Sageman's recent book *Leaderless Jihad* has been used to show the dangerous efficacy of fluid, cellular networks operating without a centrally established leadership core.<sup>34</sup> Sageman's book focuses almost exclusively upon Al Qaeda, yet his findings have been extrapolated to show how dangerous a non-hierarchical, cellular organization can be—an interpretation this dissertation directly challenges. When commenting on the danger posed by cellular terrorist organizations, such a perspective confuses survival of an organization with its ability to sustain a coherent campaign. As Sageman himself suggests, the organizational design may reflect terrorist desperation rather than signaling strategic success.<sup>35</sup> The fact that several terrorist groups have experimented with cellular, leaderless forms of organization in the past and demonstrated a limited ability to sustain campaigns is rarely considered by those declaring we face an undefeatable foe; the modern Klan is but one example of the ultimate impotence of such foes.

By singularly focusing on Ku Klux terrorism this dissertation mitigates many of the problems associated with choosing cases of different subclasses; as each of the campaigns studied is an example of Ku Klux terrorism, they all belong to *exactly* the same subclass. The challenge then becomes choosing cases that “provide the kind of control and variation required by the research problem.”<sup>36</sup> Specifically, it is important that periods of time be selected that are useful for testing the most common theories about the causes of terrorism.

To those ends, the time periods to be examined were chosen because they represent either sustained spikes or unanticipated lulls in Ku Klux terrorism. In line with Mill's Method of Agreement, three cases share the same dependent variable (a spike in Klan terrorism), but each of those cases varies in terms of the “score” of several

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<sup>34</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad : Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., Chapter 7.

<sup>36</sup> George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 83.

hypothesized independent variables in the literature used to explain terrorism. Using the Method of Agreement, therefore, enables us to rule out those hypothesized causes.<sup>37</sup> The fourth study was chosen because it was a failed campaign effort, thus rendering it a negative case, during a period of time when multiple theories of terrorism would expect campaign initiation. I therefore call this anomalous period the “non-campaign.” Immersed in economic turmoil, with several ideological opponents to mobilize against, and with emerging capable leaders, the 1970–1980s study serves as a “most likely” case of a Klan campaign.<sup>38</sup> This negative case enables us to employ Mill’s Method of Difference, whereby we can seek to isolate promising independent variables—that is, factors that co-vary with the dependent variable. The use of both the Method of Agreement and Method of Difference to explain any given phenomenon is commonly known as the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference. The Joint method, in effect, “affords a higher probability to the conclusion” reached in the analysis.<sup>39</sup> In short, this dissertation has chosen specific periods of time—guided by Mill’s Methods of Experimental Inquiry—to minimize the possibility of overstating or understating findings.<sup>40</sup>

Founded upon the logic of Mill’s Methods, the dissertation employs a structured, focused method of qualitative analysis. This dissertation is “focused” because it does not seek to describe or explain all aspects of the Klan’s history. Rather, it deals exclusively with the phenomenon of Ku Klux Klan terrorism and, specifically the ability and inability of the Klan to mount a sustained terrorist campaign. While Ku Klux terrorism is the exclusive focus, it is hoped that the findings may trigger follow on study and prove applicable in broader areas. The Ku Klux Klan is representative of domestic right wing terrorist organizations, so the study may—by extension—also provide insight into other identity motivated terrorism within the United States. Of course, as one moves from the specific topic of Ku Klux Klan terrorism outward (to racial right wing terrorism, to right

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<sup>37</sup> Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 364.

<sup>38</sup> Harry Eckstein “Case Study and Theory in Political Science.” In Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 7, 79–137 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975).

<sup>39</sup> Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 415.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 355-66.

wing terrorism in general, to terrorism broadly defined), it is possible the findings in this study will lose much of their explanatory power. Basically, policy implications with regard to domestic right wing terrorism will not be uniformly applicable to other forms of terrorism or political extremism. In short, this dissertation is focused on Ku Klux terrorism in particular and domestic right wing terrorism in general. Any further generalizations about terrorism at large must be viewed with appropriate caution.

The dissertation is “structured” in that specific, standardized sets of questions will be asked for each time period. For each period studied, the same set of questions—drawn from long-established theories of terrorism—will be posed. Giving each case study the same organization and structure, rather than crafting a distinct historical narrative for each time period, facilitates comparison of variables across the cases. Variables that have routinely been used to explain the emergence of right wing terrorism will be examined alongside one another to determine their relative weight in explaining Klan terrorism. Variables will be extracted from three leading approaches—structural, sponsorship, and organizational—all of which are reviewed in the following chapter. For instance, by applying structural theories in each case study the presence or absence of an economic recession, the presence of veterans returning from war, and the presence or absence of an ideological enemy will be considered. Sponsorship and organizational theories will be broken down and explored in similar fashion.

Although Mill’s Joint Method is intended to assist clearing up the muddled waters of causation, reality often throws a wrench into attempts at clean scientific analysis. Reality presents us with the problem of having different intensities of outcomes in positive cases, as well as different outcome intensities in negative cases. Fortunately, the methods described above are also useful in describing concomitant variation between causal variables and the outcome produced.<sup>41</sup> And again, the case studies selected are helpful in discovering the impact each variable has upon resultant levels of terrorist activity. A detailed analysis of findings using the Joint Method of Agreement and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 424-27.

Difference, blended with the Method of Concomitant Variation, is provided in the findings chapter, with political and academic implications discussed in the concluding chapter.

#### **D. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation is divided into three sections. The opening section, which includes Chapters I and II, serves as the conceptual, definitional, and analytic framework for the remainder of the study. Chapter I identifies and highlights the central focus of this dissertation—namely, how to best understand the sustained campaigns of Ku Klux terrorism and how to apply this knowledge to undercut similar right wing efforts. Chapter II defines concepts relevant to the study, provides characteristics of right wing terrorism, and explains why the Ku Klux Klan was chosen as the dissertation’s focus. Chapter II also details why the field of terrorism studies is best suited for research on the Klan and concludes with an overview of the field’s dominant explanatory approaches—broadly defined as individual, structural, sponsorship, and organizational. Following this literature review, the dissertation changes gears and begins deeper analysis of Klan campaigns.

The second section, Chapters III through VI, presents the four studies of Ku Klux Klan terrorism used to test the three dominant explanatory approaches. Each chapter will open with a narrative providing historical context in an attempt to highlight the dominant social nuances of the given time. Chapter III details the 1866 birth of Ku Klux terrorism, its meteoric rise, and eventual downfall around 1871. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the “second-wave” Klan which emerged in 1915 and achieved national prestige and power by the mid-1920s. Chapter V follows the structured format and investigates the “third wave” of Klan terrorism during the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter VI deviates from the previous three chapters in that it explores a negative case. This chapter will seek to explain why the Ku Klux Klan was unable to lead or coordinate a terrorist campaign during the 1970–1980s—a presumably ripe era which produced Posse Comitatus, the “Christian Patriots,” and lone-wolf terrorists.

The final section—Chapters VII, VIII, and IX—offers the overall findings, as well as political and academic implications of the dissertation. Chapter VII provides test

results and determines the necessity of each factor tested. Chapter VIII seeks to establish joint sufficiency and offer a more nuanced explanatory tool for understanding Klan terrorism campaigns which builds atop the management field's work on contingency theory and the social movement field's work on strategic framing. To close, Chapter IX offers several implications of the project, suggests avenues for further research on right wing terrorism, and recommends policy prescriptions based on the findings.

## CHAPTER II.     DEFINING, UNDERSTANDING, AND REVIEWING PREVALENT THEORIES OF RIGHT WING TERRORISM

As with any project, how one views and analyzes a subject is determined largely by the perceptual lenses one uses. This dissertation asserts the label *right wing terrorist organization* is most fitting to describe the Ku Klux Klan. It is through the perceptual lens offered by terrorism studies that campaigns of Ku Klux terrorism will be analyzed. Other scholars may disagree with both this categorization and the literature that yields it. For starters, some might disagree that the Ku Klux Klan should be described as an “organization.”

Many see the Klan as a movement, best understood by social movement scholars.<sup>42</sup> In a similar vein, others label the Klan a conspiracy, which represents the merging of both legal and illegal groups seeking the same political endstate.<sup>43</sup> What these perspectives do, however, is erase distinctions amongst individual groups and paint that all organizations on the racist right as elements of a Ku Klux movement. In other words, viewing the Klan as a movement or conspiracy implies that several different groups and organizations adopted a shared ideology and work—not necessarily in a coordinated manner—to achieve some shared desired ends. But if this is true and the Klan is indeed a movement, we should then expect no real hierarchy, and no rules or regulations established to govern daily operations. And indeed, there is evidence to support such a view. During the 1860s, the actions of several organizations—the Knights of the White Camilla, the Black Cavalry, and the Men of Justice to name a few—came to be labeled Ku Klux, even though each organization had its own leadership and self-regulatory processes.<sup>44</sup> The presence of such groups, while an indicator of a burgeoning social movement aimed at rejecting Republican policies, does not invalidate the notion

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<sup>42</sup> The Anti-Defamation League – a leading watchdog group focusing on radical right wing extremists – as well as several scholars (Rory McVeigh and Stuart Wright) label the Ku Klux Klan as a “movement.”

<sup>43</sup> For example see: Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, xlv.

that the Ku Klux Klan had a distinct and unique organization, their own support networks with political parties, and links with various state and local law enforcement organizations.

This dissertation acknowledges the social movement view of the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, the dissertation borrows insights regarding strategic message framing from the social movement literature. However, I argue that the Klan is better understood as an organization which operates within a broader White Supremacist/White Nationalist movement.<sup>45</sup> As will be shown, the Klan has effectively moved into and out of what could be rightfully labeled movements, but when doing so has done so for strategic and organizational reasons. This thesis maintains the Ku Klux Klan is best viewed as an organization because of its established hierarchy, which prescribes duties and functions of “dens” operating at the local level up to “realms, dominions, and provinces” at the district, state and national levels.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, Klan members pay dues, adhere (in some instances) to a rigid code of secrecy, and participate in Ku Klux-specific ceremonies and rituals. An oath of allegiance is required from each member, following an interrogation and acceptance of an obligation to the Klan.<sup>47</sup> Such demands simply do not exist in a movement, but are inherent to an organization.

Additionally, the adjective *terrorist* should precede the term organization when describing the Ku Klux Klan. As will be explored in greater depth in the sections that follow, the *terrorist* label is appropriate to describe the organization’s overwhelming reliance upon the use or threatened use of violence to send messages to a wider target audience. Klan violence became so normalized at some points, that the term “Ku Kluxed” became interchangeable with floggings, lynchings, or whippings. Although the term *right wing terrorist organization* is valid to describe the Ku Klux Klan, it is not

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<sup>45</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center, another extremist watchdog organization, adopts the same perspective on the Ku Klux Klan.

<sup>46</sup> Lester, Wilson, and Ku Klux Klan (19th cent.). *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth, and Disbandment*, 155-65.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-73.



without its own definitional problems. In order to better understand what a *right wing terrorist organization* is, we must deconstruct the term into its individual parts and clearly establish definitions for each.

To achieve value-neutrality, it is critically important to establish definitions devoid of pejorative insinuations or negative moral associations. As will be explained, each component of the term *right wing terrorist organization* possesses uncertainty, negative connotations, and lends itself to propagandistic use. To minimize this ambiguity, a clinical approach must be taken to more precisely explain certain phenomena, more accurately categorize data, and better understand the topic of inquiry—in this case, *right wing terrorism* as exemplified by the Ku Klux Klan. This will be accomplished by defining how the term terrorism will be used throughout this work.

### **Defining Terrorism**

Any terrorism study worth the paper it has been written on begins with an overview of the definitional problems within the field of terrorism studies.<sup>48</sup> This work is no different. Terrorism—a violent form of political extremism—is a term that has evaded broadly accepted definition. In what is regarded as the most extensive survey of the field, Alex Schmid and A.J. Jongman note the existence of over one hundred different definitions of terrorism containing at least twenty different definitional elements amongst them.<sup>49</sup> Governments, for obvious reasons, tend to emphasize the defining feature of terrorism as the involvement of sub-national groups. This emphasis allows governments to avoid any of their own state-directed violence being labeled terrorism. Others emphasize that terrorism is directed against “innocents,” “soft targets,” or “passive” military targets. The emphasis on these features prompts the question: who is innocent or what is a passive military force? The answer, of course, is entirely subjective. Still

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<sup>48</sup> Those that do not are apt to quickly sidestep the definitional issue, submit their version as correct, and simply move on.

<sup>49</sup> Alex Peter Schmid and A. J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism : A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*, Rev., expanded, and updated ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 5.

others assert terrorism is simply a tactic “that terrorizes,” a tautological view that clouds analytical waters, introduces unquantifiable psychological components, and prevents cumulative study.

Terrorism, for purposes of this study, is defined as “*the use or threatened use of violence, directed against targets chosen for their symbolic or representative value, as a means of instilling anxiety in, transmitting one or more messages to, and thereby manipulating the perceptions and behavior of wider target audiences.*”<sup>50</sup> According to this definition’s architects, “regardless of whether one sympathizes or abhors the underlying motives or proclaimed causes—a terrorist can be identified purely by the methods he or she employs.”<sup>51</sup> Bale and Ackerman further explain:

The best way to distinguish between terrorism and other forms of violence is to recognize that most acts of violence are dyadic—that is they involve only two parties or protagonists, the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s). In contrast, all bona fide acts of terrorism are triadic in that they involve not just perpetrator(s) and victim(s) but also wider target audience(s), whose attitudes and behavior the terrorists are consciously seeking to influence...the most important nexus is between the perpetrator(s) and the target audience(s) they are trying to influence.<sup>52</sup>

To clarify the concept, let us begin with the hypothetical bombing of an automotive plant in Detroit. The bombing, which killed ten senior executives, was the work of a recently laid-off worker. When taken into custody, the perpetrator tells police “those damn people ruined my life...my wife and kids have left me, I lost my house, and everything in my life fell apart...I wanted them and their families to feel the same pain I felt.” Although tragic, this scenario is *not* an example of terrorism. The perpetrator was simply lashing out in order to hurt the people that he felt were responsible for his misfortunes. This is an example of a dyadic relationship between the perpetrator and the victim(s). Violence, in this case, was an end unto itself and the perpetrator achieved his objective through the murder of his former employers.

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<sup>50</sup> Gary Ackerman and Jeremy Tamsett, *Jihadists and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2009), xxii.

<sup>51</sup> Jeffrey Bale and Gary Ackerman, “Profiling the W.M.D. Terrorist Threat,” in *W.M.D. Terrorism: Science and Policy Choices*, ed. Stephen M Maurer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 13.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

To understand how this same bombing scene could be considered an act of terrorism, the comments made by the perpetrator need to be different. The perpetrator would have to tell police, for instance, that “this attack is the first strike against industrialization and exploitation of the modern workers...to regain our dignity, we must be prepared to fight and destroy this evil system...workers unite...industries beware, your days of worker enslavement are numbered.” In this example, the killing of the ten senior executives was a means to an end. The bomber used the violence to send a warning message to industries while simultaneously attempting to stir others to violent action. This scenario is an example of terrorism—a triadic relationship in which the perpetrator (the bomber), sends a message through representative victims (the ten slain executives) to wider target audiences (industries and possible sympathizers). With the concept clarified, the task of differentiating types of terrorism can now be undertaken.

### **Typologies of Terrorism**

Developing a useable typology could prove remarkably beneficial to researchers studying terrorism. Unfortunately, the task of standardizing the categorization of different types of terrorism has proven elusive. The difficulty cannot be attributed to a lack of ways to categorize terrorism. In fact, the opposite problem exists; difficulty springs from the fact that there are simply too many ways in which to categorize terrorism. In 1978, Chalmers Johnson lamented “there are almost as many typologies of terrorism as there are analysts.”<sup>53</sup> In the thirty years following his comment, little progress has been made in synthesizing different approaches into a widely-accepted typology.

Although the number of classifications is enormous, the vast majority fall into one of four predominant approaches. These include *actor-based*, *means-based*, *purpose-based*, and *political orientation-based* typological approaches. For instance, a study on the use of suicide terrorist attacks would likely utilize a means-based typology that better refines data regarding the use of suicide. In short, the typology used must meet the needs of the researcher and his particular research project. Here it must be noted that most

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<sup>53</sup> Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism : A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*, 40.

studies utilize a hybrid approach that blends multiple aspects of the four pure approaches into a form that best suits the needs of a particular research project. This dissertation likewise uses a hybrid blend of the actor-based and political orientation-based typologies. The pure types of these approaches will be discussed below.

Most typologies in terrorism studies start with an *actor-based* distinction of protagonists, which begins by differentiating state terrorism (terrorism from above) from non-state terrorism (terrorism from below). Relying upon an actor-based categorization, state terrorism can be further broken down in a variety of manners. In the non-state category, we find actor-based studies that focus on Palestinian insurgent terrorism, Indian sub-state terrorism, state-sponsored terrorism, Jewish terrorism, lone-wolf terrorism, or any distinction made based on a group's location or a distinguishable physical attribute (i.e. color of skin). A recent branch of actor-based typological study has focused on transnational terrorists—sub entities that, due to the effects of globalization, draw adherents across state boundaries and generate international effects.

A second method is to use a *means-based* classification. This method focuses on either the types of weapons used or the preferred method of the terrorist act. This classification is frequently used by those focusing on how terrorist attacks are carried out. A means-based classification is especially helpful to those who wish to understand suicide terrorism, biological terrorism, hijacking, assassinations, or any specific type of terrorist attack without regard to the perpetrators, their motivations, or their ideology.

The third approach worth mentioning is the *purpose-based* approach. Here, terms such as instrumental terrorism, organizational terrorism, or inspirational terrorism are used to describe the desired endstate of terrorism. These purposes may include: (1) attrition, attempting to persuade your enemy of your long-term resolve and strength; (2) intimidation, attempting to prevent an undesired behavior from your enemy through the use of threats, costly signals, and selective violence; (3) provocation, attempting to goad the enemy into a response that is heavy-handed in the attempt to persuade your audience that the enemy is evil and untrustworthy; (4) spoiling, the use of violence to ensure any peace negotiation fails; and (5) outbidding, the competition against other organizations

for popular support among a certain audience.<sup>54</sup> The purpose based approach considers terrorism to be a rational act carried out following a cost/benefit analysis by the organization's leadership (based on an economic theory of terrorism). This dissertation agrees with the assertion that terrorism is a rational act, but will not use a purpose-based typology.

The final method of categorizing terrorism—and the one this dissertation draws on most—is based on a *political-orientation* typology. This method most commonly relies upon a linear “left-right” conception of the political spectrum. Although the left-right paradigm has changed dramatically over time, it is appropriate to revisit the origins of the term to better understand how the concept has evolved to its present usage. To do so, one must turn back history some two-hundred years to the Age of European Enlightenment. In this period, the political terms “right” and “left” referred to the circa-1780 seating arrangements within various French legislative assemblies. The parties loyal to the monarch sat on the right, while liberal pro-Enlightenment parties sat on the left.<sup>55</sup> The differences, however, went well beyond the physical location of their seats. The leftists believed that human reason and the inherent goodness of mankind were capable of solving most social problems, a belief that many rightists interpreted as anti-religious. The left maintained some ties to religion, but promoted the concept that—following creation—God left humans the necessary abilities with which to govern society without continued interference. Leftists tend to support equal representation, universal suffrage, free markets, and autonomy from religious and cultural authority.<sup>56</sup> The rightists, on the other hand, asserted that human reason would fail to solve the problems facing society. Only empowered social institutions could restrain evil human impulses and prevent a self-interested society from destroying itself. Displaying an extreme pessimism about the eventuality of human progress, the right emphasized that societal order—usually in line with religious edicts—is best established and maintained by

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<sup>54</sup> Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 49-79.

<sup>55</sup> Charles T. Goodsell, “The Architecture of Parliaments: Legislative Houses and Political Culture,” *British Journal of Political Science* No 18 (July 1988): 287-302.

<sup>56</sup> Aurel Braun and Stephen J. Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right : Freedom and Security at Risk* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997), 18-19.

empowered elites. From these roots, the right commonly champions empowered rulers, class-based economies, and the societal role of the church.<sup>57</sup>

Of course, times have changed, and the “monarchists versus reformists” basis of the right-left spectrum has changed them. As will be discussed, modern right wing terrorism is generally fueled by conceptions of “conservatism, religiosity, patriotism, nationalism and racism,” whereas hints of “liberalism, secularism, internationalism, collectivism, and egalitarianism” can be found in incidents of left wing terrorism.<sup>58</sup> Ironically, despite their polar-opposite political goals, when put into practice by close-minded individuals, the outcomes of these ideologies are virtually identical.

### **Characteristics of Right Wing Ideology**

Right wing extremism should not be depicted as a unified entity. As Eatwell and O’Sullivan note, “the right should be conceived as not one monolithic right, but a collection.”<sup>59</sup> Highlighting the point, some describe the extremist right as a “secret collective of paramilitary survivalists, tax protestors, bankrupt farmers, bikers, prisoners, Odinists, and devotees of the Identity Church, linked together by an elaborate network of computer boards, desktop publications, and telephone hotlines.”<sup>60</sup> It might appear that trying to link these disparate groups together in any manner would be an exercise in futility. Although the attempt proves difficult, it is not wholly impossible. Right wing extremism is best differentiated from other brands of extremism by its propensity to exhibit ultra-nationalist tones, its expression of “anti-ideologies,” and a paranoid belief in global conspiracies.

As one may expect, *expressions of ultra-nationalism* are the most common of right wing extremist calling cards. The central concept of ultra-nationalism is that “only people belonging to a particular nationality have a right to reside within that group’s

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 19-20. I should like to thank Professor Jeffrey Bale for presenting and discussing these issues with me at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA in February 2009.

<sup>58</sup> George and Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe : Political Extremism in America*, 20-21.

<sup>59</sup> As cited in: Braun and Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right : Freedom and Security at Risk*, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Mark S. Hamm, *American Skinheads : The Criminology and Control of Hate Crime*, Praeger Series in Criminology and Crime Control Policy (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993), 50.

country.”<sup>61</sup> Additionally, all others possessing that nationality around the world have the right to relocate and live within that established country. The great majority of right wing extremists espouse a unique and intense loyalty to specific “in-groups” based almost exclusively upon that particular group’s definition of nationality (or other collective identity, such as religion). The key to answering several questions about a particular group rests with understanding its member’s conception of nationality. For most of these groups, one’s nationality goes well beyond one’s country of residence. Instead, it is better as a shared set of traditions, cultures, beliefs, or heritage. A misunderstanding of the concept has led to several broad generalizations of all right wing extremists being racist, xenophobic, or fascist. But these characteristics are simply manifestations of ultra-nationalism. In many instances—the Ku Klux Klan being a perfect example—extremist organizations do determine nationality largely by race. This has led many scholars to “regard the entire right wing from moderate conservative to Neo-Nazi as objectively racist.” However, this broad assertion is “simply not justified.”<sup>62</sup>

For some right wing groups, “nationality” reflects a person’s legal status, regardless of race. Such groups pay little attention to race and instead focus on the legality of an individual’s immigration into the country and whether or not that individual took the “proper” legal steps to attain citizenship. If an individual is deemed an illegal, then, according to the extremist group, he or she should have no rights or privileges prescribed by that nation’s government. This leads to the sweeping generalization that right wing groups are blatantly xenophobic. However, although xenophobia is a characteristic of some groups, it would again be incorrect to assert that it is true of all right wing extremists. Other right wing groups define nationality by adherence to a specific religious doctrine. Hence, pan-Islamic, pan-Jewish, or pan-Christian state formations are the aim for some right wing extremist groups. These particularly dangerous groups care less about race or citizenship status, but instead fight for the advancement of their religion and fellow co-religionists. From these groups, the

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<sup>61</sup> Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism : Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 166.

<sup>62</sup> George and Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe : Political Extremism in America*, 199.

misconception that all right wing extremists are religious zealots is born. In sum, what seems safest to say is that a group's conception of nationality—be it “The Nation of Islam,” “The Aryan Nation,” or “America for Americans”—and the degree of loyalty exhibited to that conception are perhaps the strongest indicators of future extremist action.

The second major characteristic of right wing extremism is similarly difficult to contextualize. Perhaps the easiest way to view it is as *actions born of an ‘anti-ideology.’*<sup>63</sup> Right wing extremists are notoriously anti-Marxist, anti-capitalist, anti-intellectual, anti-liberal, anti-bourgeois and, in some specific instances, anti-clerical.<sup>64</sup> Unlike left wing extremists who can draw upon the writings of Marx, Lenin, Mao, Bakunin, Marighella, and/or Fanon, there has been no “long-term intellectual evolution of right wing theory” for right wing extremists to use.<sup>65</sup> There is no established intellectual tradition for them to draw upon. Instead, right wing ideology is most often articulated in contradistinction to other forms of political thought, which reveals why right wing terrorism is commonly viewed as a “reactive” form of violence.

Finally, right wing extremists commonly justify their acts as necessary steps to expose and defeat conspiratorial efforts that threaten their nation. Thus, understanding the *conspiratorial nature* of right wing extremism offers researchers insights into the targets and strategies of right wing extremist organizations. Understanding a particular group's conception of nationality—and the in-groups and out-groups that result—is critical to understanding the role that particular conspiracy theories play in group dynamics and activities. For domestic groups that base their conception of nationality on religion, it is common to find references to the “Zionist Occupational Government”—a Jewish cabal that has purportedly taken over the federal government and bends policy to benefit Jewish interests. For groups that base their conception of nationality on the

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<sup>63</sup> Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 150-74.

<sup>64</sup> Oftentimes, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, or anti-democratic are included in the list of “anti's.” As these three represent specific “in” and “out” groups based on concepts of nationality – they are better understood as a product of ultra-nationalism than they are as acts borne of anti-ideology.

<sup>65</sup> Martin, *Understanding Terrorism : Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues*, 165.



legality of American citizenship, there is a perception that the New World Order—an eclectic band of international communists, Jews, and/or bankers—is plotting to take over the United States with the help of the evil armies of the United Nations. These groups proclaim the existence of UN-created concentration camps scattered throughout the Pacific Northwest that will be used to systematically eradicate Americans who resist the creation of a global government. Groups that hold this belief urge their members to become self-sufficient survivalists, stockpiling food, weapons, and ammunition for their eventual clash with the UN armies. Many right wing organizations promise to resist some world transformative force. From an organizational perspective, a belief in conspiracies helps the group hold on to its members, and the lack of evidence supporting its claims only goes to show how crafty its opponents are at covering everything up.

Now that the definitional foundations for the dissertation have been laid, this chapter will turn to a review of the approaches and theories that have been used to explain and predict campaigns of right wing extremism. It is from these theories and commonly espoused explanations that the factors tested within this thesis were drawn.

## **A. THEORIES OF TERRORISM**

There is a trend in terrorism studies to label previous research as misguided, statistically flawed, ahistorical, politicized, overly passionate, or—in some cases—completely wrong. This dissertation argues that previous work contains, at a minimum, kernels of truth that point to a more accurate understanding of terrorism. Instead of dismissing past works outright, scholars should instead seek to blend the truths of each perspective and work towards a more synthesized understanding of terrorism. Open and unbiased comparison of differing theories is therefore necessary to determine the relative weight each approach offers to best explain the terrorism phenomenon in question—Ku Klux terrorism in this case. Before attempting this comparison, it is necessary to discuss each approach individually to determine their individual strengths and weaknesses.

This section will open with a review of the individual-level approaches to understanding and explaining terrorism. Although individual-level explanations of terrorism will not actually be tested in this dissertation—as they tend to focus on

individual motivations to carry out terrorist attacks and not on group efforts—they are nonetheless worth reviewing. As progress is made in understanding the human mind and the cognitive processes involved in identity formation these approaches should prove ever-more valuable in explaining and predicting terrorist behavior. Unfortunately, as the conclusions chapter will discuss, this understanding still requires further research.

The section will then turn to an overview of structural approaches, which argue terrorism is the byproduct of a specific environment. Economic distress, presence of left wing opposition, and the return of veterans from war are the variables that will be tested using this particular approach. Following the review of structural theories, the sponsorship approach will be examined. These theories share the view that an external sponsor—either a state or a political party—is key to understanding terrorism. The sponsorship approach will be parsed into two tests: the first determining whether or not a terrorist organization relies heavily upon a third party sponsor that provides direct, active support, the second test dealing with a more limited form of support in the form of tacit support. Finally, this section will examine of the organizational approach. Organizational approaches view terrorism as products of organizational design, leadership, and proper messaging. According to these approaches, a better understanding of decision-making processes within the terrorist group, the capability of leaders, and membership sustainment techniques help explain when terrorism will emerge and for how long it can be sustained. Before focusing on the four approaches individually, the table that follows provides a brief overview of all four.

<b>Theories</b>	<b>External Explanations</b>		<b>Internal Explanations</b>	
	<b>Structural</b>	<b>Sponsorship</b>	<b>Organizational</b>	<b>Individual</b>
<b>Level of Analysis</b>	<i>Macro</i>	<i>Macro</i>	<i>Meso</i>	<i>Micro</i>
<b>Key Variables</b>	Depressed Economy, Presence of Ideological Opponent, Return of Veterans, Nature of Political System	Support, either active or tacit, of an external actor or state. Include concepts such as safe havens or sanctuaries	Organizational Design, Leadership, Recruitment Techniques, Chosen Strategy of Terrorist Group	Psychological/ Sociological Deviance; friendship networks
<b>Hypothesis</b>	The presence of certain structural variables indicates terrorism outbreaks	Terrorist groups need some form of support from a 3 <sup>rd</sup> party in order to sustain operations	The strategies and decision-making processes of a terrorist group are the primary determinants of terrorism	Individuals with antisocial personality disorders are more likely to become terrorists; people are more likely to join extremist groups if they have kinship or friendship ties with members
<b>Authors</b>	Raper, Ehrlich and Liu, Payne, Linz, Azam and Thelen	Sterling, Laqueur, Possony and Bouchev, Bale, Raymond, Byman, Crelinsten	Crenshaw, Tucker	Lombroso, Hubbard, Mandel, Cooper and Pearce, Post, Sageman, Moyano, Ferracuti, Della Porta

Table 1. Approaches to Understanding Terrorism

## 1. Individual Approaches

If we consider structural and sponsorship approaches to primarily focus on macro-variables found within society at large, and organizational approaches to focus on the meso-level variables involved with a group's internal dynamics, then individual approaches focus on those micro-level factors that compel humans to join terrorist organizations and carry out violence on their behalf. From the earliest studies of terrorism, questions of why an individual would resort to such violence deeply interested psychologists. This interest ultimately set the foundation for terrorism studies. Beginning as early as 1870, research into the causes of terrorism focused on the individual psychology of terrorists. By modern standards, early research was questionable in both its scientific approaches and underlying assumptions. Scholars of the time viewed terrorism primarily as a deviant activity and hypothesized that only mentally disturbed individuals were capable of carrying out such heinous acts. Scholars who focused on individual approaches considered "terrorism to be expressive rather than instrumental political behavior" and asserted terrorism was carried out by "people acting

out their emotions, not from rational calculators.”<sup>66</sup> Given this assumption, it was only natural for experts to search for shared physical or mental abnormalities amongst terrorists. Therefore, early terrorism studies dedicated a significant amount of effort to uncovering the inner workings of a presumed terrorist mind.

From the physiological perspective, the late 19th century works of Cesare Lombroso, a pioneer of scientific criminology, were considered path breaking. Lombroso argued criminals could be identified by physical attributes, and he established a checklist of biologically-inherited traits that could be used to identify the fringe elements of society: sloping foreheads, asymmetrical faces, and ears and arms of unusual size were but a few.<sup>67</sup> David Hubbard, who posited that abnormal vestibular functions play a part in the making of a terrorist, based his argument on the medical examination of over eighty terrorists from eleven countries and findings that over 90% of those examined possessed defective vestibular functions in the middle ear.<sup>68</sup> He later went on to emphasize the roles of chemical imbalances in the formation of a terrorist.<sup>69</sup> Yet another unique idea was derived from a study exploring aggression in rats. Biochemist Paul Mandel discovered suppressed levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid and serotonin led to an increase of aggression in rodents. These findings, in turn, were used to explain aggressive behavior in terrorists—despite the fact no tests were actually done on human subjects.<sup>70</sup> Although society may equate terrorists with rats, scholars remained unconvinced by this extrapolation and turned elsewhere for insight. Instead of investigating physical defects, psychologists proposed that mental defects were a more appropriate explanation for terrorism.

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<sup>66</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism,” *Orbis* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 472.

<sup>67</sup> Cesare Lombroso, Mary Gibson, and Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Criminal Man* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>68</sup> David Hubbard, “Terrorism and Protest,” *Legal Medical Quarterly*, 2 (1978): 188-197.

<sup>69</sup> David Hubbard, “The Psychodynamics of Terrorism,” in *International Violence*, edited by Yonah Alexander and T. Adeniran (New York: Praeger, 1983): 45-53

<sup>70</sup> R.R. Corrado, “A Critique of the Mental Disorder Perspective of Political Terrorism,” *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 4, no. 3-4 (1981).

The earliest psychological work on terrorism was based on the assumption that terrorists possessed some degree of mental disorder. Psychologists initially viewed terrorism as an abnormal behavior; a behavior that “is often consistent with the presence of some psychological disorder or distress, at the very least, suggestive of a debilitating condition adversely affecting the well-being of the sufferer.”<sup>71</sup> As Horgan affirms, classifying terrorists as abnormal “seems plausible, and makes us feel at the same time more comfortable and capable in understanding extreme behavior.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, since it is easier to think of terrorists as monstrous psychopaths, the mental disorder perspective of terrorism became an ever more attractive focus for terrorism scholars.

In his 1981 article, R.R. Corrado reviewed the pre-1980 theories which presuppose terrorist behavior stems from antisocial personality disorders—primarily psychopathy and sociopathy.<sup>73</sup> Cooper and Pearce, the foremost proponents of the antisocial personality disorder theory both viewed a terrorist as “an aggressive psychopath who has espoused some particular cause because extremist groups can provide an external focal point for all the things that have gone wrong in his life.”<sup>74</sup> Cooper goes on to note that terrorists “might more accurately be described as psychopathic or sociopathic personalities for whom political terrorism provides a vehicle for impulses that would otherwise find another outlet.”<sup>75</sup> According to his line of thought, a personality disorder is what drives a person to commit terrorism. Unfortunately, this hypothesis does not stand scrutiny, and Cooper and Pearce’s findings were swept aside on the grounds of extremely shaky evidence.

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<sup>71</sup> John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Terrorism and Political Violence (New York, NY: Frank Cass, 2005), 48.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Corrado, “A Critique of the Mental Disorder Perspective of Political Terrorism.” For purposes of this project, the terms psychopath and sociopath will be used interchangeably. Although psychopathy deals more with an individual’s psychological makeup and sociopathy deals with an individual’s reaction to the environment around him, both tend to produce the same end behavior. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders notes differences between the two but classifies them both as Antisocial Personality Disorders due to the similarities between the two. So, with apologies to psychologists and sociologists who view the two as separate entities, the terms psychopathy and sociopathy are used here interchangeably.

<sup>74</sup> K.I. Pearce, “Police Negotiations,” *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 22(1977): 174.

<sup>75</sup> H.H.A. Cooper, “Psychopath as Terrorist,” *Legal Medical Quarterly* 2(1978): 254.

Although the notion of a terrorist as psychopath/sociopath has been largely rejected, work continues on several possible psychological explanations of terrorism. Much psychologically-based terrorism work rests upon the popular frustration-aggression hypothesis advocated by a team of Yale scholars in 1939.<sup>76</sup> They asserted that “aggression is always a consequence of frustration” and that “the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.”<sup>77</sup> Unlike the modern use of the term, “frustration” was defined then as an external occurrence that causes “an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavior sequence.”<sup>78</sup> The inability of a person, or group of people, to achieve their life goals thus leads to terrorist behavior in order to remove the source of goal frustration from their path. Ted Gurr expounded and built upon on the frustration-aggression hypothesis, introducing a theoretical synthesis that—according to several scholars—has proven helpful in understanding terrorism.<sup>79</sup> Gurr’s relative deprivation theory argues that it is “the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction that disposes men to violence.”<sup>80</sup> Primarily a sociological theory built atop the frustration-aggression hypothesis, Gurr’s blended theory will be discussed again in the structural approach section that follows.

The final psychological hypothesis to be discussed is the narcissistic rage hypothesis, a theory most vocally championed by Jerrold Post. “As a general rule, narcissism may be viewed as a range of psychoanalytic orientations, impulses, or behavioral patterns either wholly or overwhelmingly subject to ego concerns, as opposed

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<sup>76</sup> John Dollard et al., *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven, CT: Pub. for the Institute of Human Relations by Yale University Press, 1939).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 7. Scholars like Leonard Berkowitz slightly modified this definition and described frustration as “an obstacle blocking the attainment of an anticipated gratification. See: Berkowitz, L. “Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Examination and Reformulation,” *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 106, No.1 (1989): 59-73.

<sup>79</sup> Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism : A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*, 63.

<sup>80</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Published for the Center of International Studies, Princeton University by Princeton University Press, 1970), 3.

to object concerns.”<sup>81</sup> Based largely on Sigmund Freud’s 1914 *On Narcissism: An Introduction*, Post argues that a narcissistic personality is developed when one over-invests in oneself at the expense of emotionally investing in others.<sup>82</sup> According to Pearlstein, another advocate of the narcissistic-rage hypothesis, “political terrorism may be regarded as an excellent example of narcissistic object manipulation” that allows a terrorist to resolve inner ego conflicts through pathological public acts and, simultaneously, defend or repair his/her own self-image and conceptions of self-esteem.<sup>83</sup> According to champions of this approach, terrorist behavior is the result of adolescent psychological “externalization and splitting” that results in an inability to “integrate the good and bad parts of the self.”<sup>84</sup> The inability to rectify the self during adolescence thus produces a “condition of helpless defeatism...and a wish to destroy the source of narcissistic injury.”<sup>85</sup>

Although individual and psychological theories of terrorism maintain large degrees of support from the general population, amongst terrorism experts there is an established and ever-growing sense of pessimism about this approach. The most common rebuttal to this approach is that, although the findings it offers may be somewhat helpful in explaining a specific individual’s reasons for committing terrorism, they cannot account for the vast majority of people who have suffered frustration, have narcissistic personalities, or have psychopathic or sociopathic issues but do not resort to violence. Additionally, the hope of discovering the “terrorist personality” has been dashed by studies indicating the general absence of psychopathy, narcissism, or sociopathy in individual terrorists. The field, in turn, has thus largely coalesced around the idea that “the the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Richard M. Pearlstein, *The Mind of the Political Terrorist* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1991), 7.

<sup>82</sup> Sigmund Freud et al., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London.: Hogarth Press, 1953).

<sup>83</sup> Pearlstein, *The Mind of the Political Terrorist*, 18-19.

<sup>84</sup> Rex A. Hudson, Marilyn Lundell Majeska, and Library of Congress. Federal Research Division., *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism : Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why? : A Report* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1999), 31-32.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>86</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 390.

By the mid-to-late 1980s, psychological explanations of individual terrorist behavior had been called into question and largely discredited. Those interested in individual approaches to understanding terrorism began to focus on friendship and kinship networks, an approach more sociological than psychological. Relying on access to the terrorists themselves, scholars such as Ferracutti, Della Porta, Moyano, Waldmann, Alonso, and Post have successfully argued that an individual's radicalization process begins with participation in social or political organizations such as mountaineering clubs, church groups, or political parties.<sup>87</sup>

From these perspectives, radicalization and militancy must be understood in terms of an individual's interactions with fellow travelers, family, and friends. More recently, Marc Sageman utilized this approach to explain the coming together of the September 11th plotters and, more generally, the phenomenon he calls the "global salafi jihad."<sup>88</sup> This line of theorizing appears to be applicable to the modern Klans, as membership increasingly appears to be generationally based. However, because interviews of Klansmen were impossible to conduct across the time periods under study (beginning in the 1860s), this approach cannot be used here. In the findings chapter, I briefly consider whether some alternative approach drawn from psychology, but not focused on abnormal personality disorders, could contribute to a better understanding of terrorism.

## 2. Structural Approaches

Unlike the individual-level approach, structural theories of terrorism search for macro-level variables to explain terrorism. Structural theories seek "to identify social

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<sup>87</sup> Franco Ferracuti, "A Psychiatric Comparison - Analysis of Left and Right Terrorism in Italy," in *Psychiatry: The State of the Art*, ed. World Congress of Psychiatry (New York: Plenum, 1985). Donatella Della Porta, "Introduction: On Individual Motivations in Underground Political Organizations," in *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, ed. Donatella Della Porta (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, Inc., 1992); María José Moyano, *Argentina's Lost Patrol : Armed Struggle, 1969-1979* (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995); Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist : The Psychology of Terrorism from the Ira to Al Qaeda*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Peter Waldman, "Ethnic and Sociorevolutionary Terrorism: A Comparison of Structures," in *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, ed. Donatella Della Porta (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press Inc., 1992). Rogelio Alonso, *The Ira and Armed Struggle*, Political Violence (London New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>88</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad : Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*.



conditions (structures) that affect group access to services, equal rights, civil protections, freedoms, or other quality of life measures,” and by doing so, explain the outbreak and duration of terrorism.<sup>89</sup> For proponents of the structural approach, terrorism is born from the environment and emphasis should be placed on identifying variables within that environment that coincide with terrorist violence. Ideas based on these approaches have had significant policy consequences of late.

Among policy makers, structural theories have become one of the most popular explanations for the emergence of terrorist threats. In fact, the approach has been adopted and promoted by numerous political elites in order to justify counter terrorism initiatives. Former President George Bush once remarked, “we fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror.”<sup>90</sup> Former British Prime Minister Blair added, “the dragon’s teeth of terrorism are planted in the fertile soil of wrongs unrighted, of disputes left to fester for years or even decades, of failed states, of poverty and deprivation.”<sup>91</sup> Former South Korean President and 2000 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Kim Dae Jung further emphasized the point, asserting that “at the bottom of terrorism is poverty.”<sup>92</sup> Proposed structural remedies to terrorism—improving education, reducing poverty, or making social services available to wider sets of the population—are popular because they can do no harm. As a rule, they are beneficial to society, and as such, are easily adopted by politicians seeking political support or scholars bent on crafting a more egalitarian society.

The state of the economy is one oft-used predictor among the various structural explanations of terrorism. Terrorism theories focused upon economic variables are primarily founded on work within the field of criminology, in particular, Arthur Raper’s

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<sup>89</sup> Gus Martin, *Essentials of Terrorism : Concepts and Controversies* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2008), 45-46.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in: Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malekova, “Education, Poverty, Political Violence, and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (2004): 119-44.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in: Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist : Economics and the Roots of Terrorism*, Lionel Robbins Lectures (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>92</sup> Janet Jai, “Getting at the Roots of Terror,” *Christian Science Monitor*(2001), <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/1210/p7s1-wogi.html>

1933 work.<sup>93</sup> Raper suggests a strong correlation between economic conditions and the emergence of political violence. Other criminology studies bolstered his hypothesis and further linked poverty to an increased likelihood of crime.<sup>94</sup> From these results, a spurious link was made between crime and terrorism, and the argument that terrorism arises out of poverty gained significant traction. In their piece “Some Roots of Terrorism,” Ehrlich and Liu suggest that differing poverty levels among nations are responsible for driving the surge of terrorism.<sup>95</sup> This argument is derived from Ted Gurr’s theory of relative deprivation.<sup>96</sup> The argument is that, less developed countries steeped in poverty serve as breeding grounds for terrorists and are, therefore, more prone to violence and disorder. David Keen has strengthened this idea, suggesting that the absence of a viable economy creates a pool of willing recruits for violent organizations.<sup>97</sup> Considering the Ku Klux Klan is often portrayed as a band of poor, uneducated rednecks, it seems reasonable that economic factors would play a role in its activity.

Alongside poverty, measures of gender equity, health, education levels, and average purchasing power parity are used as potential indicators of terrorism.<sup>98</sup> The obvious implications of these studies urge a reduction in both global and interstate “economic insecurity, inequality, and poverty” while stressing “more generous welfare provisions” as a means to combat terrorism.<sup>99</sup> In support of this thesis, Azam and

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<sup>93</sup> Arthur Raper, “The Tragedy of Lynching,” in *Reprint Series in Criminology, Law Enforcement, and Social Problems* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1969 [1933]).

<sup>94</sup> Isaac Ehrlich, “Participation in Illegitimate Activities: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation,” *Journal of Political Economy* May 81, no. 3 (1973): 521-65., Richard Freeman, “Why Do So Many Young Men Commit Crimes and What Might We Do About It?,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Winter, 10, no. 1 (1996)., and Anne Morrison Piel, “Economic Conditions, Work, and Crime,” in *Handbook on Crime and Punishment*, ed. Michael Tonry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>95</sup> Paul Ehrlich and Jianguo Liu, “Some Roots of Terrorism,” *Population and Environment* 24, no. 2 (Nov 2002): 183-92.

<sup>96</sup> Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*.

<sup>97</sup> David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil War*, ed. International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper No 320 (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>98</sup> Paul R. Ehrlich and Jianguo Liu, “Some Roots of Terrorism,” *Population and Environment* 24, no. 2 (November 2002).

<sup>99</sup> Brian Burgoon, “On Welfare and Terror: Social Welfare Policies and Political-Economic Roots of Terrorism,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 2 (Apr 2006): 176.

Thelen's 2007 study suggests that an influx of foreign aid—with a special emphasis on support to education—will reduce the amount of terrorism that flows from the recipient country.<sup>100</sup>

Yet another strand of the structural approach asserts that terrorism is born from the displacement of a specific class of people as a result of increased globalization and modernization. Scholars have long pointed to the importance of modern societies in encouraging terrorism.<sup>101</sup> Modernization, in turn is being accelerated by the phenomenon of accelerating globalization. Globalization, according to Gotchev, is “regarded as a phenomenon brought about by technological and social change, furthering the links of human activities across regions and continents.”<sup>102</sup> The increased linkages of these human activities have created friction points in society, which, according to several scholars, are the root cause of terrorism.<sup>103</sup> One such outcome of this particular theory is the perception that rich countries—like the United States—tend to get richer while the poorer countries work harder yet fall farther behind. This produces a feeling of relative deprivation on an international scale and, in turn, highlights rich nations as targets for terrorist acts. Rich nations are portrayed as the beneficiaries of an unfair international system, and terrorism becomes the only weapon available by which poorer countries can seek justice. Martha Crenshaw even comments on and frames the globalization argument in the form of a “globalized civil” war.<sup>104</sup> Her argument is that terrorism may be viewed as “a strategic reaction to American power” and U.S. foreign policy may create structural conditions that favor terrorism.<sup>105</sup> Globalization theories become problematic when applied to domestic groups such as the Klan, as the Klan has existed and thrived during

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<sup>100</sup> Jean-Paul Azam and Veronique Thelen, “The Roles of Foreign Aid and Education in the War on Terror,” *Public Choice* 135, no. 3/4 (Jun 2008): 375-97.

<sup>101</sup> See: Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism”; and Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1982).

<sup>102</sup> Atanas Gotchev, “Terrorism and Globalization,” in *The Roots of Terrorism*, ed. Louise Richardson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 103.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “Why America? The Globalization of Civil War,” *Current History* 100(December 2001): 425-32.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.: 425.

times of intense globalization as well as years of limited globalization. Whether globalization theories are accurate remains open to question. Additionally, globalization hypotheses prove difficult to test as American history, broadly defined, is a narrative of constant technological and societal change—a variable that is present, in some form or another, at all times of American existence. The march towards progress and increased human linkage across regions and continents is a constant, and by comparative logic, not necessarily a “difference that makes a difference” between the occurrence or nonoccurrence of Klan campaigns. For that reason, tests of globalization’s impact on campaigns of Klan terrorism will be set aside.

The final structural theory to be reviewed deals with the type of political system a government employs. In the late 1970s to early 1980s, scholars submitted that democracies were most victimized by terrorism.<sup>106</sup> This may be due to many factors, one being that authoritarian regimes are less likely to report terrorism, as they have the controls in place to manage and manipulate information in media outlets. Secondly, authoritarian regimes are more likely to resort to brutal repression to crush terrorist organizations—an approach not afforded liberal democracies.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, democracies tolerate a diverse set of political views, ethnicities, and social norms. According to some, this diversity creates more dyads from which conflict could be sparked. In essence, “the more ethnically diverse the country, the more terrorism it experiences.”<sup>108</sup> Others mention that the level of democratic development affects the level of terrorism, but the view has been criticized by other studies.<sup>109</sup> Yet another line of argument challenges all of these notions, claiming that democracy and increased political participation and an expanded marketplace of ideas actually decreases the

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<sup>106</sup> See: Ted Gurr, “Some Characteristics of Terrorism in the 1960’s,” in *The Politics of Terrorism*, ed. M. Stohl (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1979). and Austin Turk, “Social Dynamics of Terrorism,” *Annals AAPSS* 463, no. September (1982).

<sup>107</sup> Leonard Weinberg, “Democracy and Terrorism,” in *The Roots of Terrorism*, ed. Louise Richardson (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>108</sup> Jan Oskar Engene, *Terrorism in Western Europe : Explaining the Trends since 1950* (Cheltenham, UK ; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004), 79-98.

<sup>109</sup> Tore Bjørgo, *Root Causes of Terrorism : Myths, Reality, and Ways Forward* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 234-35. For a counterargument see: Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank, “Does Democracy Stimulate Terrorism?,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 4 (1992).

prospects of terrorism.<sup>110</sup> While political systems and their effect on terrorism are interesting topics for further research, this project benefits from the fact that the Klan has always operated within the confines of the United States. Thus with the political system a constant variable, this dissertation does not consider it.

Of the four broad sections of terrorism theories presented here—individual, structural, sponsorship, and organizational—structural theories are notable for producing arguments especially well-tailored to be examined in light of the emergence of right wing terrorism. Notably, most of these have been generated by European scholars interested in the phenomenon of inter-war European fascism. The study of fascism, widely considered the quintessential example of a far right movement, is valuable for this project as many of fascist recruitment strategies, themes, and ideas closely resemble those of American right wing groups and, in particular, those of the Ku Klux Klan. Additionally, many of these theories have been adopted and used by organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Department of Homeland Security to serve as predictors of future surges in right wing terrorism.

In one of the most well-known publications on fascism, Stanley Payne reviews nine distinct theories to explain fascism and, as useful as these are for explaining the European phenomenon, they have little applicability to the study of American right wing terrorism.<sup>111</sup> This owes largely to the fact that many of his theories rest on conditions that are purely European in nature. Ideas about the birth of fascism more adaptable to American conditions can be found in a 1976 edited work by Walter Laqueur, in which Juan Linz provides a strong argument to explain the emergence, rise, and eventual success of fascist organizations. Three of the structural factors Linz suggests that are preconditions to fascist success project are: (1) a sudden state of economic crisis within a

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<sup>110</sup> Quan Li, "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (April 2005); PC Schmitter and Terry Karl, "What Democracy Is. . . And Is Not," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (1991).

<sup>111</sup> Stanley Payne, "The Concept of Fascism," in *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, ed. Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan Petter Myklebust (New York, NY: Columbia University Press distributor, 1980), 15-19.

country, (2) the return of war veterans, and (3) the presence of an ideological opponent.<sup>112</sup> All three will be tested in this dissertation.

The economic recession explanation can be nested within Gurr's relative deprivation theory. By broadening the scope of the scope of Gurr's theory to a national level, scholars and policy makers have predict campaigns of right wing terrorism will emerge in the wake of sharp national recessions. Focusing the theory on the Ku Klux Klan, arguments exist on both sides of the divide. One explanatory narrative asserts that the Ku Klux Klan phenomenon—in one study at least—was an outcome of economic prosperity.<sup>113</sup> More prominent, however, are explanations of the Ku Klux Klan as products of economic deprivation and accounts which paint Klansmen as “white trash.” These studies usually focus upon the rural aspects of the Klan phenomenon (where the economic situation is typically bleaker than in an urban environment) or paint all periods of the Klan in the light of the contemporary Klan.<sup>114</sup>

Like every other term thus far, “economic recession” requires clear definition in order to permit unbiased testing. Although one would think this would already be well defined, it appears the economics field is rife with its own definitional debates. The running joke amongst economists is that you can only tell the difference between a recession and a depression in one way: in a recession your neighbor loses his job, in a depression, you lose yours. The theory being tested here deals with sudden economic crisis that is both harsher than a mild recession, yet milder than a complete depression. A recession is usually said to begin at two quarters worth of economic downturn (usually less than 5% drop in GDP), while a depression is noted for a drop of 10% or more in

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<sup>112</sup> Juan J. Linz, “Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective,” in *Fascism: A Readers Guide, Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>113</sup> William Edward Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*, The Chicago History of American Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform; from Bryan to F. D. R.*, [1st ed. (New York,: Knopf, 1955)]; Bennett, *The Party of Fear : From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*.

<sup>114</sup> John Higham, *Strangers in the Land : Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, Corrected and with a new pref. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

GDP over a much longer time span.<sup>115</sup> For purposes of this dissertation, an economic recession of significant magnitude will be defined as an economic downturn of at least four quarters and/or coinciding with a drop of at least 3% in GDP. While these parameters may be debatable, the definition provided will, at a minimum, provide a solid understanding of how recessions are coded as either present or absent.

The return of war veterans is commonly used as an explanation for right wing terrorism outbreaks thanks to the conviction that military members were somehow disillusioned by their wartime experiences, and upon returning home, were either victims of war neurosis, or upset that the civilian populace had “stabbed the military in the back” by pulling out of a winnable war.<sup>116</sup> Other explanations suggest that the masculine nature of military service somehow makes right wing movements and organizations more appealing to returning veterans.<sup>117</sup> Historians of the Klan suggest that lack of jobs and the resultant boredom from unemployment were causes of surges in terrorism, while others argue that the liberalization of soldiers while overseas (particularly black soldiers) played a role in the resultant violence.<sup>118</sup> Still others suggest returning veterans were not pleased with the role of the United States in the wake of war, and took actions to correct the situation.<sup>119</sup> This dissertation does not seek to prove or disprove any of these theories, but will test for the mass return of veterans in each study in order to determine potential causality by employing comparative logic.

The presence of an ideological opponent as a precursor to terrorism campaigns is based upon the belief that a symbiotic relationship is built between the two groups,

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<sup>115</sup> Kajal Lahiri and Geoffrey Hoyt Moore, *Leading Economic Indicators : New Approaches and Forecasting Records* (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter 9.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Lerner, “Psychiatry and Casualties of War in Germany, 1914–18,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 1 (January 2000); Jeffrey P. Kimball, “The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War,” *Armed Forces & Society* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1998); Robert Linder, “Militarism in Nazi Thought and in the American New Religious Right,” *Journal of Church and State* 24, no. 2 (1982).

<sup>117</sup> Michael Kimmel, “White Men Are This Nation:” Right-Wing Militias and the Restoration of Rural American Masculinity,” *Rural Sociology* 65, no. 4 (December 2000).

<sup>118</sup> Dixon Wecter, *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*, A Life-in-America Prize Book (Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1944); MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*; Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*.

<sup>119</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, *Darker Phases of the South* (New York London,: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1924).

allowing each to justify their activity on the actions of the other. This theory is derived from studies of fascism, many of which indicate the power of the radical right organization was predicated on the presence of a radical left organization. The ensuing struggle between the two organizations produces a centrifugal effect, pushing the two organizations to extremes, escalating the rhetoric and actions each takes against the other, and thus, causing the state to “burn from both ends.”<sup>120</sup> Here it is important to note the differences between actual organizations and perceived threats. The latter is what a craft terrorist organization relies upon for recruitment purposes, while the former serves as a potential justification for sustained terrorism. Similar to the argument made for globalization, perceived threats are a constant factor, used by terrorist groups of all shapes and sizes. Tests conducted within this dissertation will seek out a more concrete manifestation of an ideological opponent.

This theory has been used in explaining the terrorism and eventual rise of Hitler and the Nazis as well as the emergence of Franco’s dictatorship in Spain. From a terrorism studies perspective, the theory has also been used to explain the campaigns of the Red Brigade, the Tupamaros, and the Monteneros. For purposes of the thesis, an ideological opponent will be noted if and when the Klan actually mobilizes in opposition to it. An ideological opponent will be coded as present if it is organized on a similar scale (usually national) as the Klan and actively targets the Klan in either its rhetoric or its actions, in turn generating a counter-response by the Klan. Here, I am looking for an organization that the Klan defines itself in contradiction with; a group that the Klan can point to and say “if they disappear, we will go away as well.” As structural theories are put to the test in this research project, it will be these three variables - drawn primarily from the fascism studies literature—that will be key indicators for assessing the accuracy of the approach.

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<sup>120</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 158-62.



### 3. Sponsorship Approaches

Sponsorship theories of terrorism stem primarily from the idea that terrorist organizations require either a state sponsor or the support of an established political party to craft and sustain terrorist acts. In sponsorship theories, a primary focus has been on state or political party actors that serve as the “puppet-masters” of a specific terrorist organization. In this light, terrorist organizations are simply viewed as one tool—among many—for a larger entity to wield at its discretion. Also referred to as “conspiracy theories of terrorism,” these theories highlight the prominent role that state support plays in terrorist campaigns. More recently, however, research has delineated the different levels of support that a state can provide a terrorist organization and how these varying levels affect the group’s ability to carry out terrorist attacks. Theories which emphasize sponsorship carry significant policy weight as leaders seek to determine how and when they should confront a state interacting with terrorist organizations, and what policy prescriptions could be used to curb and end these interactions. Significant amounts of time, money, and resources are dedicated to countering state support of terrorism and, for this reason, the theories supporting these policies will be reviewed and tested in this dissertation with regard to Klan terrorism.

Predominantly espoused during the 1980s, the sponsorship approach held sway among many who argued that all terrorism originated from an evil cabal of communists within the Soviet Union. For example, according to Possony and Bouchey, “there is virtually no terrorist operation or guerrilla movement anywhere in the world today, whether communist, semi-communist, or non-communist...with which communists of one sort or another have not been involved.”<sup>121</sup> In 1980, the hypothesis was lent further credence with the publication of Claire Sterling’s *The Terror Network*.<sup>122</sup> During an era of widespread anti-communist sentiment, the idea that terrorist organizations were nothing more than the puppets of an organized communist cabal gained significant

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<sup>121</sup> Stefan Thomas Possony and L. Francis Bouchey, *International Terrorism--the Communist Connection : With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof* (Washington: American Council for World Freedom, 1978), 1.

<sup>122</sup> Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network : The Secret War of International Terrorism*, 1st ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981).

traction amongst American politicians. Even respected terrorism scholars, such as Walter Laqueur, wrote that terrorism of the early 1970's involved "close cooperation between small terrorist groups in many countries, with the Libyans, the Algerians, the North Koreans, and the Cubans acting as paymasters, suppliers of weapons, and other equipment."<sup>123</sup> Near the tail end of the Cold War, definitions of terrorism emerged which suggested terrorism was impossible without the support or backing of an external sponsor. One such definition, submitted by Cline and Alexander, defined terrorism as "the deliberate employment of violence or the threat of use of violence by sovereign states or sub-national groups encouraged or assisted by sovereign states to attain strategic and political objectives by acts in violation of law."<sup>124</sup> That numerous terrorist groups existed without state sponsorship was conveniently ignored.

As could be expected, alternative theories emerged that while also positing a state sponsor, differed by contending that all terrorism was the handiwork of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency. Chomsky and Herman, for instance, claimed that "Washington has become the torture and political murder capital of the world."<sup>125</sup> This line was likewise been adopted by jihadi groups, as Ledeen goes on to note that "modern Islamic terrorism is above all else a weapon used by hostile nation states against their enemies in the Middle East and the West."<sup>126</sup> As history has proven, however, the conspiracy-laden terrorism-as-a-weapon-of-superpowers theory carried insufficient value in interpreting terrorism during the 1970s and 1980s, and, likely, even less today. Even with the Cold War long over, both Marxist and right wing hyper nationalist groups were still committing violence around the globe. If outside support is not always necessary, the problem becomes explaining how and when the support of external actors benefits terrorist organizations. Fortunately, a more clear-eyed perspective of state/non-state interactions has emerged.

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<sup>123</sup> Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 115-16.

<sup>124</sup> Ray Cline and Yonah Alexander, *Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare* (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1986), 32.

<sup>125</sup> Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*, 1st ed., *The Political Economy of Human Rights* V. 1 (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 16.

<sup>126</sup> Michael Arthur Ledeen, *The War against the Terror Masters : Why It Happened, Where We Are Now, How We'll Win*, 1st St. Martin's Griffin ed. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003), 45.

While Cold War inspired theories of state sponsorship have been largely discredited, new research suggests that external support is indeed a prominent variable in the emergence of terrorism. What is critically important, however, is how one defines the term “support.” As recent work on the subject acknowledges, “sponsorship” is a broad category that “is often applied casually and imprecisely to completely different levels of state interactions with non-state actors, ranging from providing rhetorical support and encouragement, at one pole, to engaging in hands-on logistical or operational activities on the other.”<sup>127</sup> At the same time, new studies recognize that “states are not monolithic organizations either.”<sup>128</sup> It is therefore possible—even in authoritarian regimes—for a terrorist organization to receive support from various branches of the state apparatus without the approval of the state’s leadership. In the case of the Klan, for example, several accounts document collusion between the Klan and state law enforcement—state law enforcement agencies, of course, being a part of “the state.” On other occasions, law enforcement agencies simply turned a blind eye while Klansmen went about their grisly tasks. Neither example represents the “Sterling ideal,” based on Claire Sterling’s assumption a group must be actively assisted by state sponsorship, yet both require the scholar to admit state interaction and assistance were present as Klansmen carried out terrorist acts. To study the interaction between states and terrorist groups more fully, a new approach and understanding must be adopted.

In order to better understand the dynamics between a terrorist organization and its external supporters, one must be willing to accept that levels of support from an external actor can range from “active” support to more “tacit” forms. Active forms of support—as depicted in the “Sterling ideal”—are more infrequent than tacit forms of support. Active forms of support require a state to directly assist a terrorist organization with logistics, intelligence, coordination, and/or operational planning. Tacit support, on the other hand, requires far less.

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<sup>127</sup> Jeffrey Bale, “Terrorists as State Surrogates or Proxies: Separating Fact from Fiction,” in *Making Sense of Proxy Wars: The Politics of Armed Surrogacy*, ed. Michael I. Innes (Washington DC: Potomac Press, 2010, forthcoming).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

There is a famous quote, attributed to many, according to which “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.”<sup>129</sup> The same could be said about the triumph of terrorism when states fail to act. Bale calls this form of support “state-sanctioned terrorism,” defined as “when elements of the security forces simply ignore or fail to punish acts of terrorism carried out independently by civilian vigilante groups against targets that are perceived to be enemies of the state.”<sup>130</sup> This dissertation takes the position that whether or not a state—or appendage of the state—directly or indirectly supports a terrorist organization by ignoring the transgression, the end result is what will be called a safe haven in which terrorist groups can operate freely.

This, then, brings us to definitional issues and debates surrounding the use of the term safe haven. The traditional use of the term revolves around conceptions of geography and control of that territory. This definitional framework is derived from studies of counterinsurgency, where a safe haven is broadly regarded as a patch of territory in which insurgents are safe; their enemies cannot touch him. Safe havens exhibit six general characteristics: (1) they are embedded within the structures of states, (2) they are geographical phenomena, linked to physical territories of states, (3) they are primarily rural phenomena, (4) they are isolated, yet accessible, (5) they provide terrorists the time, space, and resources to gather, organize, learn, rehearse, test, and implement plans, weapons, skills, beliefs, and so on, and (6) they serve as bases for numerous types of activities. As Michael Innes concludes, “taken in the aggregate, these six pieces of conventional wisdom offer a conceptual point of departure that is incomplete, awkward, sometimes misleading, and often conflicting.”<sup>131</sup>

This dissertation takes the counterinsurgency conception of a safe haven as its jumping off point, and follows other terrorism scholars in adapting it for application to the terrorism domain. A broader view of safe havens—created when unique legal, judicial, law enforcement, or social variables permit an organization to operate within a

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<sup>129</sup> The quote is most commonly attributed to Edmund Burke, although it is unclear when and where it was said or written. This quote has appeared several times in several different forms since that time.

<sup>130</sup> Bale, “Terrorists as State Surrogates or Proxies: Separating Fact from Fiction.”

<sup>131</sup> Michael A. Innes, *Denial of Sanctuary : Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007), 10.

narrow bound of acceptable behavior—makes the term useful shorthand for capturing the modern threat environment. From this perspective, the terrorist organization need not control the area, nor use it for logistical, recreational, or organizational purposes. The “enemy” may be able to touch the terrorist organization quite easily, as the terrorists the authorities are after may live right next door. A 2007 work entitled *Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens* details the issues with the terrain-centric conception of the term, especially when applied in the realm of terrorism studies.<sup>132</sup>

The need to revisit the meaning of safe haven arose when counterterrorism officials began to realize terrorists, in many instances, were hiding in plain sight. Further exposing the limits of the terrain-centric conception of the term was the fact that, if a safe haven was conceived as a geographic space from within terrorists operated, then the proper remedy was to send in a force capable of controlling that territory. The solution proffered was far too often the application of “boots on the ground” with a large military force. Following this, and after the military reported back to officials that they now controlled the territory in dispute, policy makers were left scratching their heads, unable to comprehend why terrorist violence continued to flare up (sometimes with greater intensity). Only once it was realized that control of territory no longer held the answer to resolving issues involving terrorist safe havens, the term was re-examined and re-crafted.

Contemporary work on terrorist safe havens predominately revolves around whether terrorists need to acquire *al-qa’ida al-sulba* (a solid base), or whether they can achieve a safe haven simply understanding the societal, legal, and judicial specifics of a given *umma* (community) and conducting operations within the limits of what that community will tolerate.<sup>133</sup> All indications point to the latter. Consequently, the terms safe haven and sanctuary will be used interchangeably in this dissertation. Aspects of legal, judicial, and societal in communities within which the Klan might operate will be considered. Because the Klan has never received full state sponsorship, this dissertation tests the sponsorship approach by considering more limited forms of support: support

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Jeffrey M. Bale. “Hiding in Plain Sight in Londonistan” *Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens*. Ed. Michael A. Innes. Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007. 139-151.

from a national political party, and the tacit support of local law enforcement organizations which leads to the existence of a safe haven. Support will be coded as active when a political party (or third party sponsor) provides logistical, operational, or financial support to the Klan, or if it participates in developing strategy with regards to the employment of terrorism. According to Bale's typology of potential state support, these active forms of support will fall into the first four categories: state-directed, state sponsored, state-supported, or state manipulated terrorism. A safe haven will be coded as present when and where law enforcement units turn a blind eye, when society encourages vigilante behavior by manipulating the judicial system to prevent convictions, or when the community attributes acts of terrorism to false perpetrators. The safe haven coding will fall in line with Bale's final three levels of support: state-encouraged, state-exploited, or state-sanctioned terrorism.<sup>134</sup>

#### **4. Organizational Approaches**

Unlike structural and sponsorship approaches which seek to explain terrorism by macro-level variables, organizational approaches focus on meso-level explanations. Organizational approaches begin with the assumption that "terrorist acts result from decisions made by individuals who are members of identifiable organizations with distinctive characteristics."<sup>135</sup> Accordingly, organizational approaches focus upon the organizational design, recruitment strategies, and leadership of a given terrorist organization. Owing largely to the prominence of the scholars who advocate this approach, organizational explanations have gained significant traction, resulting in increasing popularity as an avenue to explaining terrorism.

Most prominent among these proponents, Martha Crenshaw submits that "terrorism is the result of an organization's decision that it is politically useful."<sup>136</sup> From this perspective, terrorism is interpreted as "a willful choice made by an organization for political and strategic reasons, rather than as the unintended outcome of psychological or

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<sup>134</sup> Bale, "Terrorists as State Surrogates or Proxies: Separating Fact from Fiction."

<sup>135</sup> Crenshaw, "An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism," 465.

<sup>136</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism: Past and Present," in Charles W. Kegley, *The New Global Terrorism : Characteristics, Causes, Controls* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003), 96.

social factors.”<sup>137</sup> By this logic, terrorism is simply a tactic, rationally chosen by an organization, to achieve its political goals. This approach has been embraced by other influential theorists such as Robert Pape with his explanation of suicide terrorism as a tactic to drive out foreign occupiers.<sup>138</sup> According to these theories, the “central problem is to find when extremist organizations find terrorism useful” and how to go about altering the cost-benefit ratios to minimize terrorism outbreaks.<sup>139</sup>

The organizational perspective demands that a terrorist organization be treated like any other organization. Organizational structures, recruitment strategies, retention strategies, competition with other groups, and decision making processes are important considerations in explaining outbreaks of terrorism. For proponents of organizational theories, terrorism is simply a form of costly signaling—a strategy that works in some cases while it backfires in others.<sup>140</sup> The difference between success and failure is, therefore, largely dependent upon the choices made by the terrorist organization. Most important is the acknowledgement that the aim of many terrorist groups is simply survival. As the RAND Corporation notes, “the immediate objective of many of the world’s hard pressed terrorist groups is the same as the immediate objective of many of the world’s hard pressed corporations—that is, to continue operations.”<sup>141</sup> Thus, it is imperative to understand the internal dynamics of a terrorist organization in order to understand why and how the group initiates and sustains terrorism.

The structure of the organization also dictates when a group will use terrorist tactics and how long terrorism can be sustained in efforts to achieve its desired political ends. Tucker explains the advantages and disadvantages to different organizational

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<sup>137</sup> Martha Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice,” in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 7-8.

<sup>138</sup> Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*.

<sup>139</sup> Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice,” 10.

<sup>140</sup> Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 50.

<sup>141</sup> Bonnie Cordes, Sandia National Laboratories., and Rand Corporation., *Trends in International Terrorism, 1982 and 1983* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1984), 50.

types, and how these designs affect decisions to employ and sustain terrorist tactics.<sup>142</sup> Each different option for design of an organization—whether it is networked or hierarchical—offers different strengths and weaknesses and, as Tucker argues, some will be more successful in some environments than in others. The key for the leaders of terrorist organizations, therefore, is to implement an organizational structure that best suits the operational environment in which the group operates. This argument has recently been advanced by Abdulkader Sinno as he explains the activities, successes, and failures of Afghani militant groups.<sup>143</sup>

Additionally, effective terrorist leaders must be expert recruiters, leaders, and managers. They “must invent appropriate incentives to attract members, and must have an exceptional commitment to the group’s purposes coupled with an exaggerated sense of likely efficacy.”<sup>144</sup> Effective and charismatic leadership is crucial. Max Weber discusses—at length—the profound effect charismatic authority and personal leadership can have on an organization.<sup>145</sup> The proponents of organizational theories would argue the same holds true for terrorist organizations. Also within the purview of leadership, and best couched under management skills, are decisions a leader makes with regard to recruitment messages and propagation techniques used by his/her organization, two factors that directly impact the size and activity of the group.

This dissertation will focus exclusively upon three organizational factors. Specifically, the analysis will look into the organizational design, the leadership, and the recruitment techniques used prior to and during the campaigns being analyzed. The dissertation assumes that organizations use terrorism as a rational strategic choice, and focuses on why the group continues to use terrorism in a systematic manner over the

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<sup>142</sup> David Tucker, “Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy: Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong,” *Homeland Security Affairs* IV, no. 2 (June 2008).

<sup>143</sup> Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>144</sup> Crenshaw, “An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism,” 481.

<sup>145</sup> Max Weber, Guenther Roth, and Claus Wittich, *Economy and Society : An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).



course of multiple years. Although this selection excludes several variables within the organizational approach, these three factors are ones frequently discussed in the literature.

## **B. SUMMARY**

As Jongman and Schmid once cynically quipped, “the reader may at this point rightfully ask: Is that all there is?”<sup>146</sup> The answer: yes and no. The treatment of the individual-level, structural, sponsorship, and organizational approaches to terrorism have been purposefully broad in order to present an overview without bogging the dissertation down too deeply into any one approach. Strict adherence to one approach often leads to myopic studies which overvalue specific variables. Additionally, as theory becomes more specifically tied to a particular theoretical domain, it becomes increasingly unhelpful to political leaders tasked with crafting a response to the phenomenon in question. It would be foolish to claim any one approach is wrong or inadequate, as each provides critical insight. More foolish, however, would be to claim that any one of them provides the necessary insight to adequately explain and predict terrorism overall.

This dissertation contends that it is more valuable to consider many approaches, test them against one another in order to determine the relative weight each approach possesses in explaining the terrorist phenomenon, and then develop a synthesized explanation from that analysis to assist policymakers in crafting more suitable responses. With that in mind, this dissertation tests the sponsorship, structural, and organizational theories of terrorism against one another in order to craft a more inclusive and broader explanation of Ku Klux terrorism campaigns. The intent is to generate a synthesized, multivariate explanation of Ku Klux Klan terrorism surges in order to better understand and appreciate what needs to be taken into account when examining the broader spectrum of domestic right wing terrorism.

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<sup>146</sup> Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism : A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*, 127.

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### CHAPTER III. DEO VINDICE—THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA KLAN

*Thodika Stevika! Radical Plan  
Must yield to the coming of the Ku Klux Klan!  
Niggers and leaguers, get out of the way;  
We're born of the night and we vanish by day;  
No rations have we, but the flesh of man –  
And love niggers best—the Ku Klux Klan;  
We catch 'em alive and roast 'em whole,  
Then hand 'em around on a sharpened pole,  
Whole Leagues have been eaten, not leaving a man,  
And went away hungry—The Ku Klux Klan;  
Born of the night, and vanish by day;  
Leaguers and niggers, get out of the way!<sup>147</sup>*

In 1867, the Ku Klux Klan launched the most violent terrorist campaign ever experienced in the United States, one which marks it as one of the most active and effective terrorist groups in history. With a century of hindsight, theorists of all schools might have predicted a surge of post-Civil War violence: structuralists might have argued that economic depression, the presence of an ideological opponent, and a tsunami of returning war vets made a Klan campaign highly likely; proponents of sponsorship explanations would have been able to point to the Democratic Party's sponsorship of the Klan as a means to defend its political base; finally, proponents of organizational explanations assert the Klan's structural design, leadership, and effective messaging were bound to make it the most effective violent organization of the period. But, that is all with hindsight.

This chapter offers a brief historical examination of the “first wave” Ku Klux Klan, then, three theoretical approaches, containing eight separate factors, will be tested side by side to determine their contribution to explaining the “first wave” Klan terrorist campaign. The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate how the study of the 1860s Ku Klux Klan offers support for each of the three approaches discussed in chapter two.

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<sup>147</sup> As quoted in: E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, History of the South, V. 8 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1947), 168.

Though not its original intent, the 1860s Klan ultimately became the “radical flank” to a Democratic-led resistance to Radical Reconstruction. The organization systematically targeted all who supported the Republican party, creating an environment of political and social intimidation that effectively regained power for Southern Democrats within a half decade. The Klan was not afraid to use terrorism to achieve its desired ends. Freedmen (especially Union Leaguers), scalawags, Radicals, and schoolteachers received special attention from the Klan as they most directly represented the manifestation of Reconstruction policies in the South.

#### **A. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

Although shots rang out as late as June 1865, the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on April 9th is widely regarded as the “official” end of the American Civil War. While April 1865 marks the cessation of conventional warfare, attempts by Washington to institutionalize Appomattox would trigger violent insurgency—a phenomenon that goes woefully under studied. Reconstruction, the political program designed to reintegrate the former Confederate states back into the Union, was a fairly inconsistent initiative, ranging from an 1863-1867 “soft policy, to a much “harder” Radical Reconstruction Plan begun in 1867. Complicating the efforts, Reconstruction meant different things to different segments of Southern society. While the North was recognized as the “winner” of war, the Southern population proved unwilling to adopt the Reconstruction policies demanded by Republican political leaders in the wake of Lee’s surrender. Begun as early as 1863, Reconstruction efforts frequently made naïve assumptions about Southern receptiveness to Northern ideals and values. Most distasteful was what Southerners perceived to be an attempt to destroy the societal foundations of the South and turn “a white man’s country” into a more egalitarian society in which former slaves were allowed to own and work their own land. Even more problematic in the eyes of white Southerners was that these former slaves would be recognized as legitimate and equal voters in state and national elections. The turn of events was too much for many Southerners to stomach. So blatant was Southern disregard for Northern policies that the postwar 1865 Louisiana Democratic party platform openly proclaimed “that we hold this to be a Government of white people, made

and to be perpetrated for the exclusive benefit of the white race; and...that people of African descent cannot be considered as citizens of the United States, and that there can be, in no event, nor under any circumstances, equality between the white and other races.”<sup>148</sup>

The society from which the Klan emerged could hardly be considered homogeneous. Though broadly depicted as a war between North and South, the Civil War created such a complex array of societal schisms that both political and actual guerrilla wars had to be dealt with by both Northern and Southern leaders as major conventional operations took place.<sup>149</sup> Society was torn as Northern Democrats attempted to undermine Radical Republican initiatives, conservative and moderate Republicans took issue with both Democrats and Radical Republicans, Southern Republicans begged for support and received little from their Northern party, and small farm planters took issue with the gains of both blacks and plantation classes in the South.

Though the North had its own share of societal schisms—owing primarily to immigration influxes—the antebellum South was forced to deal with a worldview that had been upended by the war. In the name of efficient resource mobilization, the South’s wartime “series of executive directives and national legislation regarding conscription, suspension of habeas corpus, impressments of supplies and slaves, and tithing of agricultural production” left virtually no part of Southern society unaffected by the war.<sup>150</sup> To overcome material shortfalls, the South ramped up efforts to increase manpower, lowering conscription ages to seventeen and raising upper limits to fifty.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Stacy McGoldrick, “Confederate Police and the Post-Slavery Racial Order: A New Perspective on the New Orleans Race Riot of 1866,” in *Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Rodney D. Coates (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2004), 39.

<sup>149</sup> Small guerrilla bands of pro-Union Southerners were known to burn bridges and sabotage Confederate logistical lines in attempts to assist Northern war efforts. When caught, these men were subjected to torture, hanging, or death by firing squad. See: Eric Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 1st ed., The New American Nation Series (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 13.

<sup>150</sup> Vernon Burton, “Civil War and Reconstruction, 1861-1877,” in *A Companion to 19th Century America*, ed. William L. Barney (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2001), 50.

<sup>151</sup> Howard R. Smith, *Economic History of the United States* (New York, NY: The Ronald Press Company, 1955), 295.

As the war dragged on, Southern infrastructure fell into disarray, as only remnants of the labor workforce remained to maintain it.

Once post-war Reconstruction efforts began, antebellum social classes found themselves also disrupted; economic and social power shifted to merchants, putting established paternalistic labor relations in jeopardy.<sup>152</sup> The planter class simultaneously fought efforts to industrialize the South—or failing in that effort, attempted to control industry itself—forcing future southern industrialists to confront long-established Southern power structures.<sup>153</sup> Further destabilizing the post war Southern society was the heterogeneous makeup of returning war veterans; some black, some Unionists, some Confederates, many yeoman, and officers from a privileged Southern class. Each possessed a unique view of the war and what it meant in terms of the future South—views that conflicted in ways often leading to violence.

It is an understatement to say that American society was a fractured one in the wake of the war. There was one aspect, however, that both the North and the South could agree upon: the widespread belief in white supremacy. Masterfully captured by Michael Hunt in his 1987 work *Ideology and Foreign Policy*, United States society—in line with predominant Western views of the time—maintained an almost universal belief in white supremacy and the hierarchy of races.<sup>154</sup> The North frowned upon the issue of slavery, but there was little disagreement between whites that the white race was a superior one. The belief in white supremacy was given credibility through the “scientific” works of American scholars. Dubbed the “American school” of racism, Samuel Morton, George

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<sup>152</sup> David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Dwight B. Billings, *Planters and the Making of a “New South” : Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

<sup>153</sup> Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South : Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

<sup>154</sup> Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

Gliddon, Josiah Nott, and Ephraim Squier offered scholarly support for beliefs that the races were created separately, with the white race representing the masterpiece of the Creator's design efforts.<sup>155</sup>

From the political standpoint, during the two years following Lee's surrender, the South enjoyed a rather lenient transition from defeated entity back to a normalized existence. A soft peace envisioned by Abraham Lincoln was carried out in even softer fashion by Andrew Johnson. Presidential Reconstruction plans extended statehood to the former Confederate states under conditions that required little—if any—real changes to Southern social structures. President Johnson, whose “main objection to slavery was that it benefitted a few white men, but not all of them,” drew the pointed ire of Radical Republicans when he pardoned over 14,000 former Confederate soldiers and political leaders.<sup>156</sup> Northerners bemoaned the fact that Johnson was simply putting antebellum Southern leaders back into positions of power. Those pardoned would fulfill the Republicans' worst fears, returning to government offices working to rebuild their respective states according to an antebellum societal mold.

President Johnson allowed the former Confederate states a free hand in reestablishing their governments, under the single stipulation that the states recognize and ratify the slavery-abolishing Thirteenth Amendment. Following ratification and acceptance into the Union, states were largely free to do as they pleased to rebuild Southern civil society. As Southern states were admitted back into the national government, Democratic representatives and senators began to tilt political power in Washington. In the eyes of Radical Republicans, this was politically unacceptable. They

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<sup>155</sup> Samuel George Morton and George Combe, *Crania Americana* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839). Josiah Clark Nott et al., *Indigenous Races of the Earth* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1857); Josiah Clark Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind : Or, Ethnological Researches Based Upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and Upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological and Biblical History : Illustrated by Selections from the Inedited Papers of Samuel George Morton and by Additional Contributions from L. Agassiz, W. Usher, and H.S. Patterson*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854). E. G. Squier and Jay I. Kislak Collection (Library of Congress), *Nicaragua : Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal : With Numerous Original Maps and Illustrations* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1852).

<sup>156</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 16.

soon realized the future of their party rested upon the establishment of an electoral alliance with freedmen and known union men in the South. Particularly important were the votes of freedmen.

The Thirteenth Amendment established that the black population—once counted as a three-fifth vote per individual—would be considered equal to the white population. To Southerners, as long as the black population remained under their control, this stipulation could be interpreted as a positive turn of events. Immediately, the voting population of the South swelled to the point where ex-Confederate states would receive an extra fifteen representatives in Washington. However, the fact that the African-American vote would be controlled by the Democrats and their loose bands of enforcers horrified Republicans. In essence, the South would now be politically stronger than it was before the Civil War without having to alter the racist foundations upon which that society was built.

As could be expected, Southern states reconstituted their governments upon the basis of “Black Codes,” a system which again subjugated the freedmen to the whims of their former white masters.<sup>157</sup> In many instances, now that the freedmen were no longer considered the property of whites (and as such, something to be protected), African Americans suffered even greater cruelties than when working on the plantations. Radical Republicans were outraged by the fact that, in essence, the blood and treasure expended on the Civil War had been for naught. Northern Republicans, in turn, prepared for political war, declaring the Congressional elections of 1866 to be their battlefield. Surprisingly, the greatest contribution to the Republican cause would come from its greatest enemy. In a counterproductive effort to bolster support for his fellow Democrats, President Johnson’s almost single handedly ensured a sweeping victory for the Republicans in Congress through his political ineptitude. Johnson’s propensity to engage in—and usually lose—heated debates with members of the crowd as he travelled was a

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<sup>157</sup> Thomas Wagstaff, “Call Your Old Master - “Master”: Southern Political Leaders and Negro Labor During Presidential Reconstruction,” *Labor History* 10, no. 3 (Summer 1969). Black codes were laws put in place throughout the South beginning in 1865. These laws severely curtailed the civil rights of African Americans, preventing them from voting, testifying against whites or serving in organized militia units.



boon for the Republican Party. Republicans made tremendous political gains during the election. The balance of political power in Washington shifted in their favor.

With this shift, the time of leniency toward the ex-Confederate states was about to come to an end. In March 1867, following the 1866 electoral success of Radical Republicans, the First Reconstruction Act was passed. This act effectively treated the Southern states as conquered territories, creating distinct military districts to be governed by Northern Republican sympathizers and forcing the South to accept Radical Reconstruction efforts through the implementation of martial law. Although violence had been endemic in large swaths of the South before the 1867 bill—most notably the Memphis and New Orleans race riots that resulted in 85 deaths and 175 injuries—sustained and coordinated acts of right wing terrorism would soon rage throughout at least nine Southern states.

Despite the aggressive aims of Radical Reconstruction and the threat of martial law, “only 20,000 troops remained on duty in the South by the fall of 1867, and this number gradually fell to 6,000 by the fall of 1876.”<sup>158</sup> Due in large part to the tremendous deficit of law enforcement capability, the South fell into complete lawlessness. Hangings, beatings, murder, and arson became the flavor of the day in almost all ex-Confederate states and “vigilantism became more or less institutionalized.”<sup>159</sup> At the forefront of this violence was an organization hell-bent on undermining Reconstruction efforts, reestablishing the complete subordination of the former slaves, and punishing white scalawags and carpetbaggers for “teaching niggers and making them like white men.”<sup>160</sup> This was the world that welcomed the Ku Klux Klan.

The birth of the Klan took place in the law offices of Judge Thomas Jones in Pulaski, Tennessee in May 1866. The organization began simply and without great fanfare. The earliest Klan was nothing more than an entertaining outlet whose aim was to

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<sup>158</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, xxxiv.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, xlii.

<sup>160</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 428.

alleviate “the tedium of small-town life.”<sup>161</sup> It was begun by six returning Confederate soldiers who found Pulaski life an utter bore. Three of the six were assigned the duty of crafting rules, positions, and ceremonies. The remaining three formed a name committee. During their second meeting, the name Ku Klux Klan was chosen because, as one historian noted, it sounded like it “was the kind of name people liked to repeat, just to hear the sound of its sinister syllables.”<sup>162</sup> A derivation of the Greek word *kuklos*—meaning circle—the name was adopted in order to “attract attention without specifically asking for it.”<sup>163</sup> In line with the ceremonial procedures of many American fraternities, the early Klansmen developed complex rituals, prescribed the wearing of strange uniforms, established organizational responsibilities for Klan members, and implemented a unique—often humorous—naming protocol for the group’s officers. It is hard to find fault with the claims of its earliest members, which indicated that the Klan was “designed purely for amusement, and for some time after its founding it had no ulterior motive or effect.”<sup>164</sup>

The Klan’s initially benign purpose soon evolved into far more violent and sinister goals. Beginning in early 1867, several ex-Confederate generals, Democratic politicians, and renowned “vigilantes” filled the ranks and began to reorient the Klan’s founding rationale. These changes in membership patterns led one of its original members to proclaim “it is to be lamented that the simple object of the original Ku-Kluxes should be so perverted as to become political and pernicious in its demonstrations.”<sup>165</sup> Soon, the tendency to play pranks amongst themselves gave way to playing practical jokes on others—in particular, former slaves. Numerous stories exist of former slaves being approached by ghostly creatures at watering holes and witnessing these apparitions drink entire buckets of water, proclaiming they were famished from their journeys to and from hell. According to the stories, the ex-slave would take to heels

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<sup>161</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 3.

<sup>162</sup> Horn, *Invisible Empire; the Story of the Ku Klux Klan, 1866-1871*, 9.

<sup>163</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 4.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>165</sup> George Washington Cable, *The Negro Question; a Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South*, Doubleday Anchor Books, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 171-72.

in abject horror. In reality, the buckets of water were being poured into a huge funnel and ran down a tube connected to a large water bag, where the liquid was collected and poured out after the “hell visit” had reached its conclusion. These pranks were immensely enjoyed by members of the Klan, as they demonstrated the perceived gullibility and ignorance of the freedmen. Eventually, however, these harmless pranks lost their appeal and “hell visits” took on an entirely different form.

Pranks gave way to violence, and “before it ended, thousands of people—most of them innocent of any indictable offense—were subjected to beating, shooting, hanging, rape, or exile plus the loss of money, property, crops, and sometimes lives.”<sup>166</sup> Attacks of extreme viciousness became commonplace. In Louisiana, during November 1868, at least thirty Negro bodies floated down the Red River.<sup>167</sup> In what is now considered to be a low estimate, a Congressional committee claimed 1,081 people had been killed within an eight month timeframe (April-November 1868) within Louisiana alone.<sup>168</sup> In 1868 Arkansas, over 200 murders were committed in a three month span.<sup>169</sup> In July 1868, Arkansas witnessed the launch of a two month Klan campaign which killed twenty, eight of those in a single day. In a later instance, Klansmen broke up an 1870 Republican political rally, killing four African Americans and wounding fifty-four.<sup>170</sup>

To combat the wave of terrorism, numerous calls were made for the slaves to organize into militia units and defend themselves against Klan terrorism. In the few instances where this occurred, the freedmen found themselves at a tremendous disadvantage. Klansmen, usually ex-Confederate soldiers, had superior weapons and training in relation to any freedmen defense forces. Numerous narratives detail

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<sup>166</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 58.

<sup>167</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 207.

<sup>168</sup> United States. Congress. Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States., Luke P. Poland, and John Scott, *[Report of the Joint Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, So Far as Regards the Execution of Laws, and the Safety of the Lives and Property of the Citizens of the United States and Testimony Taken]* (Washington,: Govt. print. off., 1872), 251-52.

<sup>169</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 154.

<sup>170</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 427.

confrontations between Klansmen—usually numbering over fifty—and militia units (both black and white), describing the conversations Klansmen had with militia officers before conducting marches around the public square.<sup>171</sup> According to these narratives, the Klan backed down militia units in the great majority of confrontations.

One clear example of Klan opposition to black militias was the story of Major Avery and his South Carolina Klan. Between November 1870 and September 1871, Major James Avery and over forty South Carolina Klansmen (with support from North Carolina Klansmen) went on a violent rampage, targeting black militia members throughout the area. During this eleven month timeframe, Avery's group was responsible for eleven murders, more than six hundred whippings, and the destruction of five black schools and churches.<sup>172</sup> On March 6th 1871, Avery led his band of miscreants on a quest to destroy the black militia organization in the county. He first started by abducting James Rainey from his home, beating him, and then hanging him from a nearby tree. The Klansmen spent the rest of the night "beating and whipping black militiamen and their families."<sup>173</sup> When Avery had finished, the militia was in shambles, disbanded yet again, and the Klan once again enjoyed free reign. Instead of being an effective force against Klan terrorism, black militias served as a lightning rod that drew Klan violence upon their members. But those who chose not to arm themselves fared little better.

Atrocities committed against African Americans during the time rival the most violent acts of contemporary terrorism. In May 1868, a black Louisiana Republican was taken from his home and beheaded.<sup>174</sup> In 1871, Mississippi freedman Jack Dupree was "beaten severely, then taken to a wood several miles away, beaten again, and then disemboweled."<sup>175</sup> In Alabama, a prominent black Republican was "taken from his

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<sup>171</sup> Horn, *Invisible Empire; the Story of the Ku Klux Klan, 1866-1871*, 50-85.

<sup>172</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 90.

<sup>173</sup> Kermit L. Hall, "Political Power and Constitutional Legitimacy: The South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871-1872," *Emory Law Journal* 33(Fall 1984): 922.

<sup>174</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 362.

<sup>175</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 287.

home...by the Ku Klux Klan, who murdered him and mutilated his body almost beyond recognition.”<sup>176</sup> Bodies of African Americans hanging from trees or courthouse overhangs were not uncommon sights in Southern states. In short order, the Klan’s aim to paralyze and subjugate the freedmen was a reality. According to a Freedman’s Bureau agent in Tennessee, by 1868 Klans “have compelled a more complete system of surveillance over the freedmen scarcely equaled under the old slave regime...they are completely subjugated—afraid to say their souls are their own, afraid to express their sentiments, and afraid to exercise the elective franchise conferred upon them by the laws of the State.”<sup>177</sup> The fear of the Klan throughout the African American community ran deep, deep enough to drastically alter voting patterns and political power structures throughout the South. Despite freedmen hatred of the Klan, they were forced—either physically or psychologically—to comply with Klan demands. Those who did not often met a traumatic, and frequently fatal, reckoning at the hands of the hooded menace.

The Klan’s use of unconstrained violence was not limited to African Americans. White Republicans and Northern businessmen—known respectively as scalawags and carpetbaggers—were prominent objects of Klan terrorist acts. In Texas, Captain George Smith, a former Union officer, had relocated from New York in order to expand his business and find fortune as a merchant. In time, Smith became a prominent Republican politician elected to the Texas state constitutional convention. To Klansmen, he was “a dangerous, unprincipled carpetbagger who lived almost entirely with Negroes on terms of perfect equality.”<sup>178</sup> His political alliance with the freedmen made him a prime target for Texas Klansmen—a distinction that eventually cost Smith his life. Following an altercation with the Klan at a political rally, in October 1868, Smith was arrested and taken to jail. A mob of over seventy Klansmen descended upon the guarded cell, overpowered the soldiers assigned its defense, and emptied each of their weapons into Smith’s body.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>177</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 47.

<sup>178</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 143.

<sup>179</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 295.

It can be argued that the relatively quick death afforded Smith was kind in comparison to the horrors that awaited other whites throughout the South, particularly Southerners who had turned their back on the Confederate cause. As a means of punishment for housing three black men, a female South Carolina “scalawag” was taken from her home, stripped of her clothes, beaten, and subjugated to tar being poured into her vagina.<sup>180</sup> In an 1871 South Carolina incident, William Champion was kidnapped from his home, stripped naked, and beaten. Another den of Klansmen were simultaneously kidnapping a black husband and wife couple—both in their sixties—down the road from Champion’s beating site. The second Klan group marched the kidnapped freedmen down the road to meet Champion, where the black man was forced to take a switch and beat Champion. When he failed to beat Champion to the Klan’s satisfaction, he was stripped and made to lay on the ground with his legs spread, where Champion was then forced to kiss his exposed anus. The freedman’s wife was then stripped, and Champion was forced to perform oral sex on her. “How’s that for nigger equality” was the parting taunt as the Klan disbanded for the night.<sup>181</sup>

Local law enforcement officers who dared challenge the Klan’s authority fared no better. In 1868, Arkansas Deputy Sheriff William Dollar was taken from his home, tied to an ex-slave by his neck, dragged about 300 yards, and then shot to death. The Klansmen then “entwined the two bodies together in an embrace and left them in the road, where they remained an object of attraction to the curious for two days.”<sup>182</sup> In 1869, Sheriff O.R. Colgrove was ambushed and killed for arresting white men accused of terrorizing freedmen.<sup>183</sup> In most instances, however—whether intimidated by or sympathetic to Klan terrorism—local police assisted the Klan in its efforts.

As far as audacious showings of terrorist/law enforcement collusion go, the hijacking of the steamboat *Hesper* has few equals. In 1868, Arkansas governor Powell

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<sup>180</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 69.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>182</sup> Powell Clayton, *The Aftermath of the Civil War, in Arkansas* (New York,: The Neale Publishing Company, 1915), 117.

<sup>183</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 317.

Clayton realized his state militia and law enforcement agents were undermanned and undergunned. To rectify the situation, he sent an agent to New York to purchase four thousand rifles, ammunition, and necessary accessories to outfit a state militia to counter the Klan. Word quickly got out about the shipment headed to Arkansas and panic spread about the potential of armed black militias.<sup>184</sup> The Klan was able to perfectly monitor the position and movement of the shipment—most probably from the information passed along by those tasked to defend it. As the steamboat *Hesper* departed Memphis enroute to Arkansas, it was shadowed by the tugboat *Netty Jones*. After being overhauled by the tugboat, the *Hesper* ran aground in Arkansas, where whistles blew and “sixty or seventy armed and masked men sprang up and began shooting wildly.”<sup>185</sup> By night’s end, the Klan had either destroyed or acquired the steamboat’s four thousand weapons and set the empty steamboat adrift downstream.

Teachers employed by black schools became a special target of Klan terrorism. The luckiest ones suffered only verbal insults and veiled threats. As one Northern teacher wrote, she became accustomed to “the polite salutation of ‘damned Yankee bitch of a nigger teacher,’ with the occasional admonition to take up my abode in the infernal regions.”<sup>186</sup> Threats offering to send teachers to “the infernal region” were soon backed by action. In Mississippi, a particularly disturbing event—though not particularly uncommon in the South—played itself out. Two teachers, Daniel Price and Warren Tyler, alongside Republican activist William Dennis, sought to unite the black community to confront Klan terrorism, only to be jailed for their “making incendiary speeches.” According to the sheriff, these speeches prescribed “a form of black terrorism” and were “a prelude to Negro insurrection.”<sup>187</sup> During the preliminary hearing of the three, several armed white men entered the courtroom and, soon thereafter, shots rang out. The presiding judge and two freedmen were killed immediately in the

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<sup>184</sup> Otis A. Singletary, “Militia Disturbances in Arkansas During Reconstruction,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1956).

<sup>185</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 157.

<sup>186</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 14.

<sup>187</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 292.

courtroom, and Dennis was later taken from “protective custody” while his guard was—by chance—missing. Dennis was later discovered with his throat slit.

The same night that Dennis was murdered, the mayor fled the city as a black church went up in flames. Armed white bands “under the nominal control of the sheriff” scoured the city confiscating weapons and arresting leaders of the black community. Over the course of a few days, “other Negroes were shot down and mutilated.”<sup>188</sup> By 1871, of the eleven black schools stood up in Winston County, Mississippi, not one was left. In neighboring Monroe County, twenty six were burned to the ground and A.P. Huggins, the superintendant of public schools, was mercilessly whipped by the Klan.<sup>189</sup> Klan opposition to black education was pervasive throughout the ex-Confederate states. Violence directed at teachers and black schools was noted in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Targeting of schools was so prevalent, in fact, that a historian with deep sympathies towards the Klan admitted “the worst work the Ku Klux Klan ever did was its opposition to negro schools.”<sup>190</sup>

The Reconstruction-Era Klan is unquestionably one of the most violent examples of terrorist activity in American history. Unfortunately—due to the fact that most of the attacks went unreported—the true scale of violence will never be fully determined. It is said that by the mid-to-late 1870s “the North may have won the War, but the South had now won the peace.”<sup>191</sup> The violence unleashed by the Klan undoubtedly played a significant role in that “victory.” During the early 1870s, the national government was forced to suspend habeas corpus in areas throughout the South, and to send federal soldiers to enforce martial law in support of the 1871 Ku Klux Act signed by President Grant. The threat of life under military rule, combined with a renewed spirit to hunt

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>189</sup> Horn, *Invisible Empire; the Story of the Ku Klux Klan, 1866-1871*, 84. The term, “waving the bloody shirt” originates from this event, as Huggins’ shirt was allegedly taken to Congress and waved before leadership in an effort to highlight Southern atrocities. See: Stephen Budiansky, *The Bloody Shirt : Terror after Appomattox* (New York: Viking, 2008).

<sup>190</sup> William Garrott Brown, “The Ku Klux Movement,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 87(1901).

<sup>191</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 111.



down and prosecute Ku Klux members, led to the atomization of the Klan by 1872. The damage, however, had already been done. By 1875, the North had lost interest in maintaining large numbers of soldiers in the South to keep the peace. Enforcement efforts fell apart, and social life in the post-war South reverted to antebellum conditions. Thus, the Klan can be said to have waged an effective domestic insurgency in the United States.

Although several historical narratives exist regarding the 1860s Klan, to date there has been no attempt to test different theories of terrorism against these histories. The following section aims to rectify this deficiency. The section will undertake a systematic examination of structural, sponsorship, and organizational explanations of terrorism in an effort to determine whether or not the case fits the expectations of each approach respectively. To be clear, what is being evaluated in each section should not be interpreted as this author's own argument about the causes of terrorist campaigns. What is being determined is the presence or absence of variables commonly used in existing theories to predict and explain right wing terrorism. Only after all four periods have been examined via this method will this dissertation offer its own argument, in keeping with the structured, focused approach.

## **B. STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS**

To those seeking support for structural explanations of terrorism, the Reconstruction-era Klan affords plenty. Economic devastation, the presence of an ideological opponent of the Klan, and the mass return of war veterans were hallmarks of the time. While structural explanations are abundant, the importance of each of these variables differs depending upon the historical narratives and reports one chooses to review. To historians sympathetic to the "Lost Cause" of the South, the post-Civil War south was painted as an apocalyptic nightmare.<sup>192</sup> Many pre-1940 accounts of the South

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<sup>192</sup> Examples of the Dunning School include, but are not limited to: James Wilford Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi* (New York, London,: The Macmillan company, 1901). Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York,: The Columbia university press, The Macmillan company, agents; etc., 1905). Charles W. Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas* (New York,: Columbia university, Longmans, Green & co., agents; etc., 1910). William Watson Davis, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida*, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, Ed. By the Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University, (New York,: Columbia University; etc., 1913).

portrayed a vast, burning wasteland where majestic and noble plantations once stood. Hard-earned fortunes were lost as the Northern armies razed the countryside. “Sherman’s sentinels”—brick chimneys that reached skyward on charred grounds where mansions once stood—dotted the Southern landscape. These accounts highlighted the corruption and lawlessness imposed upon the South as carpetbaggers and scalawags were vaulted into positions of power. According to these narratives, courageous Confederate vets were left jobless and poor while newly freed African Americans flooded the job market and—during their off time—sexually terrorized white women.

This perspective was challenged during the second surge of the Klan in the 1920s.<sup>193</sup> It was the publication of W.E.B. Du Bois’ 1935 book *Black Reconstruction in America* that offered the first comprehensive view of Reconstruction from an African American perspective.”<sup>194</sup> By this account, economic and physical devastation of the South was not nearly as pervasive as originally thought. Devastation was undeniably present in the South, but only in widely dispersed areas. Fortunes were indeed lost, but most were those that had been built upon the backs of slaves, and in many cases, the financial impacts upon this class were not as profound as many early histories asserted. In fact, those who felt the greatest impact from the Civil War were the farmers and single-family ranchers who would have been considered impoverished even before the war began. Although the Civil War is routinely characterized as having been fought along a North-South divide, a huge social chasm existed within the Confederacy during the war that would be further exacerbated after it. Referred to as “the Inner Civil War,” several dormant “societal fault lines” became exposed as the war progressed.<sup>195</sup> For many, the Civil War was nothing more than “a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.”<sup>196</sup> The armies of the South swelled with draftees from “the poorest class of non-

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<sup>193</sup> See Leonard J. Moore, “Historical Interpretations of the 1920’s Klan: The Traditional View and the Populist Revision,” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 24, no. 2 (Winter, 1990), 341-357

<sup>194</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction : An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935).

<sup>195</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 11.

<sup>196</sup> Peter S. Bearman, “Desertion as Localism: Army Unit Solidarity and Group Norms in the U.S. Civil War,” *Social Forces* 70, no. 2 (December 1991): 322.

slaveholders whose labor is indispensable to the daily support of their families.”<sup>197</sup> Rich plantation owners and their families could avoid service by providing twenty slaves for every male they wished to exempt from military service. For the poor, this was simply too high a price. In the war’s aftermath, the entire South suffered, but, unable to acquire credit and increasingly taxed on land that dwindled in value, the poorest paid the highest price.<sup>198</sup> Undoubtedly, the “truth,” if one exists, about Reconstruction lies somewhere between the pro-Southern accounts and more recent pro-Northern accounts; most likely closer to the latter narratives. With this in mind, it is now possible to explore the structural explanations for Klan terrorism.

The most common structural explanations for the emergence of terrorism deal with the repercussions of economic downturns. The post-war Southern economy lends support to this view. It is undeniable that the South went into an economic tailspin due to the tremendous burdens and aftershocks of war. To fully understand the significance of the economic recession, it must first be understood that the South on the brink of Civil War was considered a very rich area. In fact, “the levels of income per free person in the South were actually higher than those in the North...moreover, they were increasing at a more rapid pace.”<sup>199</sup> This prosperity would come crashing down as war took its natural toll.

The slash and burn tactics employed by Sherman and his army, combined with the tremendous economic efforts required to sustain war, left the South in economic turmoil.<sup>200</sup> The Northern military strategy of blockade and attrition warfare wore down the Southern army and starved it of industrial and economic reinforcement. By most estimates, the cost of physical destruction of the South was estimated to be in the billions

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<sup>197</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*.

<sup>198</sup> Lacy K. Ford, “Rednecks and Merchants: Economic Development and Social Tensions in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1865-1900,” *JAH* 71(September 1984): 297-99.

<sup>199</sup> Ross M. Robertson and Gary M. Walton, *History of the American Economy*, 4th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 244.

<sup>200</sup> James L. Sellers, “The Economic Incidence of the Civil War in the South,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 14, no. 2 (September 1927).

of dollars.<sup>201</sup> Economic rebound would prove elusive, as the South was forced to reconfigure society in the face of emancipation. Confederate currency became even more worthless with Lee's surrender. Railroad systems were destroyed during the war (by some accounts, "two thirds of the South's railroads were utterly destroyed or crippled into inaction"), and with them, so too was the hope for interstate trade and commerce.<sup>202</sup>

For the South in general—and slave owners in particular—the most traumatic economic impact resulted directly from emancipation. For the slave owner, the slave was a piece of property and represented a rather significant financial investment. Many slaveholders in the South anticipated that the slaves would be freed, but also expected to be compensated for their government-induced losses. Considering the precedent set by Great Britain's 1833 compensated-emancipation plan, their expectations were justified.<sup>203</sup> However, despite Lincoln's initial attempts to enact a compensation plan, the efforts never became law, and slaveholders were forced to accept that they would lose their "slave property" outright.<sup>204</sup> Needless to say, by the conclusion of the war, "the greatest single possession the Southerner lost was his property in Negroes."<sup>205</sup> The consolidated amount lost—depending on the source—ranged from \$1 billion to \$5 billion.<sup>206</sup> The amount is likely closer to the latter than to the former.

In the wake of Appomattox, the national economy endured an almost three year recession which saw a GDP drop of nearly 25%. Beginning in April 1865 and ending somewhere near November 1867, there were numerous painful economic repercussions as the now re-unified country began its transition away from a wartime means of

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<sup>201</sup> Claudia D. Goldin and Frank D. Lewis, "The Economic Cost of the American Civil War: Estimates and Implications," *The Journal of Economic History* 35, no. 2 (June 1975): 308.

<sup>202</sup> Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, 3.

<sup>203</sup> Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 180-82.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, 5.

<sup>206</sup> Claudia Golden and Frank Lewis, "The Economic Costs of the American Civil War: Estimates and Implications," *Journal of Economic History* 35(1975): 299-326.

production toward a “peaceful” co-existence.<sup>207</sup> The recovery would be short lived, as another eighteen month economic downturn took place between 1869 and 1870. Although it occurred after the time period in question, the dramatic six year economic depression which racked the United States economy from 1873-1879 demonstrates the instability of the post-war economic order. In sum, although it is impossible to reach agreement about the level of destruction, there is unanimity about the fact that the economy of the South was crippled after the Civil War, unable to fully recover until the dawn of the new century. The resultant economic quagmire plunged the national economy into deep recession at a time the Klan campaign began to take off. Economic explanations for Klan campaign emergence find support therefore, during this period.

A second structural argument used to explain the emergence of right wing terrorism is the presence of a left wing antagonist. For the Reconstruction-era Klan, this left wing antagonist took the form of the Union League. According to Klansmen—and many Southerners—“it was composed of the disorderly element of the negro population and was led and controlled by white men of the basest and meanest type.”<sup>208</sup> Union Leagues, or Lincoln’s Loyal Leagues as they were sometimes called, were established in the North as early as 1862, but were injected into the South between 1865 and 1867 to assist the newly freed slaves in understanding their new rights, to register them for voting, to set up educational systems, and to promote a sense of political solidarity within the freedman community. While the Leagues sought to affiliate like-minded Union men and freedmen in support of a Reconstruction agenda, it was hardly the centrally directed conspiracy many anti-Reconstruction southerners imagined. Still, for Southerners, the secret nighttime meetings of the Union Leagues smelled of a sinister plot.

Klansmen themselves supported the idea of the Klan as a force to thwart the goals of the Union Leagues. According to a founding member of the Klan, “it was partly, I may say chiefly, to resist this aggressive and belligerent organization that the Ku Klux

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<sup>207</sup> Chester W. Wright, “The More Enduring Economic Consequences of America's Wars,” *The Journal of Economic History* 3, no. Supplement: The Tasks of Economic History (December, 1943): 9-20.

<sup>208</sup> Lester, Wilson, and Ku Klux Klan (19th cent.). *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth, and Disbandment*, 79.

transformed themselves into a protective organization.”<sup>209</sup> In an even more conspiratorial explanation of terrorism, Klan violence was even blamed on the Union League itself. For instance, Benjamin Hill explained to a Congressional committee that the murders of Republicans, scalawags, freedmen, and carpetbaggers were the work of Loyal Leagues looking to paint the Klan in a violent light in order to prompt a Republican-led military intervention.<sup>210</sup> The Klan, in this conception, was a purely defensive organization performing an “immense service at this period of Southern history” that served to moderate the uncontrollable acts of the Union League.

It is undeniable that Southerners viewed Union Leagues with great suspicion, and many believed the Klan arose as a defense against them. A more sincere look at the Union Leagues indicates that they were simply the physical embodiment of a multiple perceived threats (from scalawags, northern businessmen, teachers, carpetbaggers, etc), not necessarily the threat itself. The argument—disingenuous as it may be—that the Union League was the cause of Klan terrorism is, sadly, alive and well even today. Again, for this period one can find support for the structural explanation that an ideologically opposite antagonist is necessary to trigger and sustain terrorism.

An influx of war veterans—the final variable to be explored—provides additional support to the structural approach. At war’s end, a defeated Confederate army limped home to discover its world had changed. Confederate veterans and Confederate widows were horrified to discover that all pensions had been withdrawn for their service.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, laws were passed that barred any Confederate veteran (or person known to sympathize with the Confederate cause) from employment in certain sectors. According to one historian, over 174,000 soldiers were paroled from Northern prisoner of war camps, and an additional 60,000 were let out of prisons.<sup>212</sup> Jobless, disenfranchised, and without pensions, Confederate soldiers played a central role in the organization and strategic trajectory of the Klan. Soldiers brought with them all that is desired by a

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>210</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 332.

<sup>211</sup> Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, 13.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 14.

terrorist organization—discipline, military skills, and understanding of operational security being but a few. Consistent with the theory that returning war veterans are more prone to the nationalistic overtures of right wing organizations, high ranking confederate soldiers filled national and state leadership ranks, while junior officers filled out regional command levels.

The Klan also offered psychological support to those physically unable to carry on a physical fight, in return many offered active Klansmen motivation and inspiration to continue. Many of those who came back were in poor physical shape and would require state support for their medical issues.<sup>213</sup> Disfigured, barred from several employment avenues, and without pensions, it should be no surprise that many of these soldiers enjoyed the prestige, camaraderie, and ideology that the Klan provided. It was, in fact, six ex-Confederate soldiers who created the Klan and, in turn, populated its ranks with former soldiers. These soldiers—with their own friendship networks forged during the war—reached out and further spread the Klan. That the return of war veterans is undeniably present means that what we find in the 1860s is consistent with what the structural approach suggests.

### C. SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS

Sponsorship explanations emphasize the role of an external sponsor—either a state sponsor, a non-state sponsor, or an established political party—as a necessary precursor of terrorism. To many modern scholars, it is apparent that “the Klan was a military force serving the interests of the Democratic Party.”<sup>214</sup> It was no secret that the vast majority of Ku Klux Klan member were sympathetic to the Democratic Party and that “nearly all members regarded the Klan as a secret political party on behalf of the Democratic Party.”<sup>215</sup> In Washington, the Klan was protected by Democratic lawmakers, many of whom publicly questioned the existence of the group in the face of

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<sup>213</sup> Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*.; Francis Butler Simkins and Robert H. Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill,: The University of North Carolina press, 1932).

<sup>214</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 425. Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, xxix.

<sup>215</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 114.

overwhelming evidence that detailed its organization, past actions, and future strategic aims. Alabama governor Robert Lindsay even remarked “I do not think there ever was a political motive in any outrage committed on a colored man” when he was questioned about Klan terrorism in the state.<sup>216</sup>

Although Democratic leaders attempted to distance themselves from Klan terrorism in public, their private interactions with the Klan highlighted close cooperation between the terrorist organization and the political party. Beginning as early as 1867, Klansmen began a violent “political campaign” to boost voter turnout in support of the Democratic leadership. Republican ballots were confiscated at polling stations, African Americans were escorted to the voting booth and forced to vote Democrat; should they refuse, they were “simply muscled away from the polls” and often whipped for their insolence.<sup>217</sup> Although heinous, the Klan’s efforts proved effective. In the 1868 Presidential election, Georgia witnessed huge swings in voter preference. In Colombia County, where Republicans received 1,222 votes in previous elections, the number fell to 1. The trend repeated itself in other counties. Republican support in Oglethorpe fell from 1,144 to 116; in Warren, from 1,124 to 188; and in twenty two other counties Republican support dropped from 3,000 to 87.<sup>218</sup> Klan-supported Democrats soon began to rise to positions within both state and national offices.

Direct support of the Klan from the Democratic party can hardly be disputed, as it was “impossible in many places to separate the violence engaged in by groups of Democrats from that of organized Klans.”<sup>219</sup> It proved an efficient and effective relationship. By 1870, Republicans had lost state control in North Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia. The results in these states can be attributed directly to Klan violence. In Georgia, “Klan violence had made it virtually impossible for Republicans to campaign or

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<sup>216</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 434.

<sup>217</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 118.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>219</sup> Herbert Shapiro, “The Ku Klux Klan During Reconstruction: The South Carolina Episode,” *The Journal of Negro History* 49, no. 1 (January 1964): 36.



vote.”<sup>220</sup> The political success of the Democrats from 1868-1870 prompted one black Republican to remark “it seems we are drifting back under the leadership of the slaveholders...our former masters are fast taking the reins of government.”<sup>221</sup>

Other strands of the sponsorship approach deal with either the tacit or active support of different appendages of the government, in this case the law enforcement arm. Again, the Reconstruction-era Klan supports this line of thought. To put it bluntly, Southern law enforcement organizations were either completely supportive of Klan terrorism or woefully incapable of countering it. Freedmen were not yet recognized in courts and were prohibited from testifying against any white citizen, so justice was a dead end street. Instead, members of the black community relied upon law enforcement agencies to actively protect them and intercede before violence occurred. They were left wanting. As one paper reported, “were all the Ku Klux arrested and brought to trial, among them would be found sheriffs, magistrates, jurors, and legislators, and it may be clerks and judges.”<sup>222</sup> From this perspective, law enforcement was not an issue; the problem was that white supremacy, not Constitutional law, was the social norm being enforced. This was most blatant in Texas, where—dumbfounded by the levels of unrestrained violence—Union General Philip Sheridan declared that if he “owned both Texas and Hell, he would rent out Texas and move to Hell.”<sup>223</sup> A July 1868 state report indicated 1,035 confirmed homicides had taken place since the end of the war, yet prosecutions had led to only one legal execution—an execution that was, ironically, of a

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<sup>220</sup> Elizabeth Studley Nathans, *Losing the Peace; Georgia Republicans and Reconstruction, 1865-1871* (Baton Rouge,: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 204.

<sup>221</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 444.

<sup>222</sup> Cincinnati Gazette, as quoted in: United States. Congress. Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States., Poland, and Scott, *[Report of the Joint Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, So Far as Regards the Execution of Laws, and the Safety of the Lives and Property of the Citizens of the United States and Testimony Taken. Part 2. Appendix, p 286.*

<sup>223</sup> John C. Fredriksen, “Philip Henry Sheridan.” in *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, eds. David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 1762.

black man.<sup>224</sup> The indirect support offered by law enforcement's blind eye gave the Klan a safe haven throughout the South. National forces sent to dry up these havens of support did little until 1871.

When well-intentioned governors requested federal military assistance, they were appalled to learn that the military force would come under the jurisdiction of the local sheriff—often a Klansman himself. Instead of patrolling the streets, federal forces were kept in barracks—a location to which freedmen fled whenever the Klan rode. When the legal rules that kept federal military forces under the jurisdiction of local sheriffs failed, politicians were forced to establish state militias to put down the Klan. This further exacerbated the problem. Few white Southern men would join the militia, so politicians were left with no other option but to arm Northern men and African Americans. The sight of armed black men patrolling the street infuriated the population, resulting in broader ideological support for Klan violence. This, of course, resulted in an escalating cycle of protest and violence which compelled state leaders to disband the offending militia.

The significance of sponsorship and safe haven is further bolstered when one considers how Klan terrorism was undercut when safe havens were dissolved and active opposition took their place. It could be argued that the series of Enforcement Acts beginning in the 1870s significantly curbed Klan terrorism. The final act, known as the Ku Klux Act, made it a federal offense to impede black suffrage and afforded the President the option to suspend habeas corpus, use federal troops to arrest violators, and try those arrested in federal courts.<sup>225</sup> The key to this legislation was that federal troops were no longer under the jurisdiction of local law enforcement and politicians. Now unconstrained, these forces arrested hundreds of Klansmen, although few were actually ever prosecuted. As sponsorship theories would suggest, the elimination of law enforcement support—both active and tacit—during the 1870s all but eradicated Klan terrorism.

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<sup>224</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 104.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 24.

According to sponsorship theories of terrorism, campaigns emerge when the supporting entity is blocked from power, and dissipate once that sponsor has achieved its goals. Once comfortable with its status, the sponsor will simply turn off its Frankenstein-like creation and put it into hibernation until it is needed again sometime in the future. What happens to the Klan during this period supports this argument. Klan activity was, indeed, curtailed in the wake of Democratic political success. At the state level, when Democrats were excluded from political power (and during their struggles to return to prominence), Klan violence flared. By the mid-1870s, most of the former Confederate states were back under Democratic control, and organized Klan violence had become far less significant than between 1867 and 1870. Additionally, when law enforcement agencies either tacitly or actively supported the Klan, regardless of what party was in power, violence soared. When they cracked down, the frequency of Klan terrorist violence plummeted. Even in Republican locales, where law enforcement actively opposed the Klan, society often provided Klansmen a safe haven by making it impossible to prosecute or convict a Klansmen through the judicial system.<sup>226</sup> Thus, both factors tested under the sponsorship approach remain viable explanations for the Reconstruction-era Klan terrorist campaign.

#### **D. ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS**

Thus far, both structural and sponsorship approaches are supported by study of the Reconstruction-era Klan, as each of the factors tested for are indeed present during this period. Organizational explanations fare just as well. As described previously, organizational approaches to explaining terrorism focus on the internal dynamics of the group. Organizational design, leadership, recruitment strategies, and communication outlets of the terrorist group thus bear analyzing.

The structure of the Klan between 1866 and 1867 speaks to the importance of organizational design in promoting a terrorist campaign. As explained in the opening section of this chapter, the Klan began strictly as a social club for Pulaski gentlemen who sought an outlet for their boredom. Neighboring towns were soon aware of the strange

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<sup>226</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 434-35.

group of hooded men, and the Pulaski Klan swelled with new recruits attracted by the organization's mystique. Although intended in jest, there is truth to the statement that "if Pulaski had had an Elk's Club, the Klan would have never been born."<sup>227</sup> Although anti-black violence would have likely still occurred without the Klan, it might not have been as organized or sustained in the absence of the Klan's ability to mobilize support. However, once news of the Klan spread to the areas surrounding Pulaski, requests inundated the founding six seeking permission to open Klan franchises in surrounding Tennessee counties. Broad and disorderly expansion of the Ku Klux soon followed. The original founders had no formalized mechanism (or little desire) to control the activities of sister spin-offs, at least not initially.

In April 1867, the leaders of the Pulaski den (local-level Klan grouping) decided they needed to rein in the surrounding dens. Calls were sent out to each established Klan to meet in Nashville at the Maxwell House Hotel to discuss reorganization and control mechanisms.<sup>228</sup> The stated aim of the meeting was "to reorganize the Klan on a plan corresponding to its size and present purposes...to secure unity of purpose and concert of action" and "to distribute the authority among prudent men at local centers and exact from them a close supervision of those under their charge."<sup>229</sup> Under the direction of Brigadier General George Gordon, a plan was adopted to establish a rigid organization of Tennessee Klans under state leadership while simultaneously creating plans for outward growth and eventual control under a national hierarchy. Gordon borrowed heavily from the organizational regulations of earlier groups like The Order of the Star Spangled Banner and the Know-Nothing Party.<sup>230</sup> At the Nashville meeting, officers were elected to fill state positions, but vacancies existed at both the national (Empire) level and the surrounding state (Realm) levels. That the Democratic Party convened directly across the street at the same time is of no small coincidence, since many prominent Klan leaders would soon emerge as leading personalities within the Democratic Party as well. The

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<sup>227</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 33.

<sup>228</sup> The date and location of this meeting coincide exactly with the Democratic Party's call for nominations for the upcoming election.

<sup>229</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 38.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

vacancy of overall Klan command was rectified by the election of Nathan Bedford Forrest—of Fort Pillow infamy—to the post of Grand Wizard.

Forrest immediately set to work spreading the Klan throughout the former Confederate states. A Civil War hero throughout the South, Bedford had both the charisma and authority to command respect and to attract others to his cause. As a railroad entrepreneur and insurance salesman, his work carried him throughout the South. As he travelled, Klan Dens sprang up in his footsteps. Soon, the Grand Wizard had established an Empire to rule over and, to ease the burden of management, divided that empire into state-level Realms. Each Realm was overseen by a Grand Dragon, who oversaw the Grand Titans of a Dominion (congressional district). The Grand Titans, in turn, kept check on the Grand Giants who commanded their Provinces (counties). Within each Province was a collection of Dens (local communities), commanded by a Grand Cyclops. Each level of governance had appointed staffs, and at the bottom of this pyramid were the Ghouls—the foot soldiers who paid dues and carried out the orders of their superior officers. Indeed, the early Klan was a well-established hierarchy created by professionals with vast knowledge of military-style command and control.<sup>231</sup>

To fill the Dens, the Klan needed to have a recruitment pitch that resonated with a widely targeted audience. Again, Forrest was adept at promotion, and he adopted a pitch both broad in scope and noble-sounding in cause so as to attract a wide range of men, even if the oath stretched all limits of the truth. The 1868 Klan Prescript decreed the Klan “an institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism; embodying in its genius and its principles all that is chivalric in conduct, noble in sentiment, generous in manhood, and patriotic in purpose.”<sup>232</sup> Its three purposes, as proclaimed from on high: (1) to protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless from the indignities, wrongs, and outrages of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal; (2) to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and to protect the States and the people thereof from all invasion from any source whatsoever; and (3) to aid and assist in the execution of all

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 31-53.

<sup>232</sup> Lester, Wilson, and Ku Klux Klan (19th cent.). *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth, and Disbandment*, 155.

constitutional laws and to protect the people from unlawful seizure.<sup>233</sup> While there is no clear evidence to why individuals were attracted to the Klan, one may speculate that the pitch resonated well amongst Confederate vets, that the disguises worn by members provided anonymity to those seeking violent alternatives to the political system.

The Klan also seized upon the prevalent fear that the newly freed slaves would prowl the cities and rape or sexually assault white women. Any gesture from an African American towards a white woman was considered a sexual transgression which sparked outrage and violent reprisal. One Southern judge affirmed this sentiment, saying “I see a chicken cock drop his wings and take after a hen; my experience and observation assure me that his purpose is sexual intercourse, no other evidence is needed.”<sup>234</sup> The Klan innately understood this societal fear and took up the cause to defend and protect white womanhood—a sentiment alive even today.

Of course, in order to be successful, an organization needs a method by which to communicate and coordinate its actions. For the Reconstruction-era Klan, mass communication occurred through Democratically-controlled newspapers. Fantastic sounding notes, all intended for publication, would be passed to the editors of newspapers. A message could conceivably read: “Make ready! Make ready! Make ready! The mighty hobgoblins of the Confederate dead assemble. Mr. X will soon meet a painful fate at the Hideous Hour of Crimson...beware, beware, beware.” To those unfamiliar with the Klan language, the warning appears to be little more than mystic babble. To Klansmen, however, it meant a non-lethal attack would be launched on Mr. X at 7:00pm next Saturday night. Pre-assault meeting places and times were already established by Den regulations. The editing staffs of these newspapers would plead ignorance, and assert that they were forced to print the message by the evil, ghostly apparitions who delivered it. Thus, newspapers served as critical command and control tools through which to propagate and coordinate Klan terrorism.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 20.

Beyond simply coordinating attacks, newspapers also played a significant role in extending Klan reach. Historians note that “the primary role in spreading the Ku Klux Klan was played, not by General Forrest and his cohorts, but by the Southern Democratic newspaper press.”<sup>235</sup> Fabulous and mysterious stories of Klan activity went to print whenever the editor could find an opportunity, and support for the Klan was lent outright by many newspapers. The Nashville *Gazette*, for example, once proudly published that “niggers are disappearing...with a rapidity that gives color to the cannibalistic threats of the Shrouded Brethren...run, nigger, run, or the Kuklux will catch you.”<sup>236</sup> The Ku Klux Klan thus combined a strong organizational construct and strong recruitment strategy with an effective means of communication. Internal cohesion and a sense of loyalty to the organization were the final needed elements to ensure complete organizational effectiveness—both factors to which Forrest attended.

For any organization—be it terrorist or commercial—the maintenance of unit cohesion is an important part of sustaining operations. Klan leadership understood this and placed tremendous emphasis on maintaining internal security, secrecy, and loyalty. Secret passwords and sayings were established to ensure operational security. To compel a recruit to remain loyal to the Klan, the Ghoul would take an oath “to never reveal to anyone not a member of the Order of the \*\*\*, by any intimation, sign, symbol, word or act, or in any other manner whatever, any of the secrets, signs, grips, pass-words or mysteries of the Order.”<sup>237</sup> Those who violated secrecy or acted outside the instructions of their officers were met “with a fearful and just penalty of the traitor, which is death, death, death” at the hands of his brethren.<sup>238</sup> Members of the Klan were made to pay dues, participate in Klan ceremonies, and support the organization in any way possible. Threat of violent reprisal for refusal to do so ensured the Klan maintained rigid obedience. Additionally, when Klansmen went on the attack, it was routine to pass

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<sup>235</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 62.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>237</sup> Lester, Wilson, and Ku Klux Klan (19th cent.). *Ku Klux Klan: Its Origin, Growth, and Disbandment*, 173. \*\*\* was used to hide the words Ku Klux Klan in any internal document.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

around the whipping stick to each member of the attacking party. This ensured that if one person in the party went to law enforcement officials, he would have to implicate himself as well.

Organizational explanations of the causes of terrorism seem vindicated by study of the Reconstruction era Klan. Klan violence became rampant with the creation of an effective organizational structure headed by an effective leader. Rules, regulations, and a strategic vision were put into place early in the Klan's life. This gave each Realm a common operating picture and an ability to act independently without direct control by the Grand Wizard himself. When personally threatened with federal action, General Forrest publicly disbanded the Klan (privately, it is assumed he handed operational control to his Dragons). By this time, however, the Klan's violent trajectory had been set and the Klan was adequately prepared to operate as a cellular organization that could act in accord with what each local environment permitted. By 1877, the end of Radical Reconstruction, the Klan would go into hibernation, only to be reawakened four decades later.

## **E. CONCLUSIONS**

With regard to the applicability of each approach considered, the Reconstruction Era Klan campaign provides a support for each. In fact, it is the "perfect storm" if we seek an environment in which every approach has its predictions supported. Structural explanations of terrorism are defensible given the economic turmoil of the South, the presence of an ideological opposite in the form of the Union Leagues, and the mass return of war veterans. Concomitantly, sponsorship approaches are well supported, as the Klan was widely considered to work in cahoots with the Democratic Party and had ample "safe havens" from which to operate. Lastly, organizational explanations are reasonable as the Klan established a hierarchical organizational design under effective leadership, seized upon the concerns of society to boost recruitment, and implemented a tough method of internal control to ensure the compliance of its members.



Although the proponents of each approach can take a measure of satisfaction in empirical evidence in this period lending their arguments support, for purposes of this dissertation, the Reconstruction era Klan proves problematic. To see why, we must turn to another era of Klan terrorism.

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## CHAPTER IV. HISTORY WITH LIGHTNING—THE JAZZ ERA KLAN

*Law and order must prevail  
Cohabitation between whites and blacks must stop  
Bootleggers, pimps, hangers-on, get right or get out  
Wife-beaters, family-deserters, home-wreckers,  
We have no room for you  
Law violators, we are watching you. Beware...  
We stand for old glory and 100% americanism  
We invite all 100% americans to join us.  
Here today, here tomorrow. Here forever. Watch us grow.*<sup>239</sup>

The Klan of the 1920s shared similarities with its Reconstruction-era predecessor, yet had considerable differences as well. Among its continuities was the underlying core belief in white supremacy, though the Jazz era Klan hid it better. African American migration northward following the Great War produced a wake of race riots in its wake. This was just the opportunity the Klan needed to break its Southern boundaries and propagate nationwide. The 1920s Klan still promoted itself a defensive organization, but took aim against a broader array of potential targets than did its predecessor. Both the Reconstruction and Jazz era Klans aimed for political influence but for wholly different reasons. The Reconstruction Klan attempted to regain political power in the South in the name of the Democratic Party, while the Jazz Era Klan largely sought political support in order to promote organizational survival, generate wealth for its leaders, and provide the Klan an air of respectability. Although the group relied on a campaign of terrorism to achieve its aims, Klan leaders attempted to steer the organization and adopt a more politically-minded strategy. This strategy was based on gaining the national political power necessary to cover up some of the Klan's more insidious acts in order to keep the group alive. During this period of the Klan's existence a true ideological opponent was largely absent. Nor did the Klan receive active support from either an established national party or third party international sponsor, although it did enjoy safe haven throughout the country.

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<sup>239</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 56–57.

The chapter begins with a historical overview concentrating on the substantial terrorist campaign the Jazz era Klan waged for over five years. Following this summary, the three approaches commonly used to explain terrorism campaigns will be tested against the case.

Unlike the Reconstruction era Klan, whose primary aim was to undermine the efforts of Radical Reconstruction, the Jazz era Klan concentrated on group preservation and growth, which translated into personal income for Klan leaders. To promote such growth, racist recruitment tactics and allusions to the Reconstruction era were toned down and replaced with socially-acceptable rhetoric. In the public sphere, the Klan adopted a family-values tone, emphasizing American ideals and Protestant ethics. Privately, the Klan sold hate wherever the local environment permitted. The impact of this strategy proved significant. During the 1920s, the Klan was able to politically steer several states, alter the outcome of numerous elections, and even gain the support of a President and Supreme Court justice.

Although political role of the Jazz era Klan will be highlighted—as it was at the time—this political turn does not mean that the Klan suddenly abandoned its terrorist tactics. Quite the contrary, as over five hundred acts of terrorism could be attributed to Klansmen during period under study.<sup>240</sup> The list of atrocities includes acts of castration, acid brandings, burning men alive, floggings, hangings, shootings, arson, and the introduction of cross burnings to send the message that the Klan was present. Admittedly, this violence appears a strange counter to the 1923 Klan rally which drew over 200,000 to a picnic and family get-together in Indiana, an irony which highlights the unique nature of this period in the Klan's history.<sup>241</sup> To understand the paradox and the rise of the second wave Klan, it is necessary to revisit the years immediately following the failure of Radical Reconstruction.

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<sup>240</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 371-80.

<sup>241</sup> For a detailed review on the numerous portrayals of the 1920s Klan in literature see: Leonard J. Moore, "Review: Historical Interpretations of the 1920's Klan: The Traditional View and the Populist Revision," *Journal of Social History* 24, no. 2 (Winter 1990).

## A. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

With its objectives achieved in the South, the Klan went into a period of hibernation between the years 1877 and 1915. During that time, due largely to the political climate the Klan helped establish by 1875, the South reverted back to its antebellum social roots. Republican support for Southern Reconstruction abated as northerners became weary of the time and effort needed to create lasting change in the former Confederacy. The Ku Klux Acts were largely overturned by 1883, and through numerous Supreme Court decisions (such as *Slaughter-House* (1873), *Minor v. Happersett* (1875), *United States v. Reese* (1876), *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), *Hall v. De Cuir* (1877) and *Texas Railroad v. Mississippi* (1890)) the gains made by African Americans during Reconstruction were largely eroded.<sup>242</sup> In 1886, *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized racial segregation, in essence politically legitimizing a widespread American belief in the tenets of scientific racism.<sup>243</sup> By 1890, virtually all African American social and political gains from Reconstruction had been undercut. Those remaining would be further crushed by the enactment of Jim Crow laws, rules which systematically disenfranchised registered black voters and justified barring African-Americans from most public venues. By the turn of the century, bolstered as it was by “science,” white supremacy was still very much the ideological foundation for power structures in the South.<sup>244</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to paint the South as a pure racist society while describing the North as a haven of equality. Although there was an overwhelming zeal to transform the South in the wake of the Civil War, Northern passion to drive societal change died out over time. The Reconstruction enthusiasm would be replaced by a

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<sup>242</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 10-12.

<sup>243</sup> Scientific racism, still a broadly accepted notion in the early 1900s, attempted to use anthropology and science to show differences between ethnic groups existed. Though largely discredited today, the use of scientific techniques to validate concepts of racial superiority was long commonplace. For history of the impact scientific racism had upon society, see: John P. Jackson and Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, Racism, and Science : Social Impact and Interaction*, Science and Society (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2004).

<sup>244</sup> Most prominent among these works was: Charles Benedict Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (New York,: H. Holt and company, 1911).

feeling of apathy and a growing sentiment that maybe Southerners were right about the inequality of races and the proper social role of blacks. Whereas hatred and fear of African Americans fueled violence in the South, Northerners found themselves confronting a different set of others. Because the Klan has always possessed a keen knack for finding purchase among those beset by hatred and fear, it is worth exploring the sources of Northern anxiety.

Rapid industrialization of the North after the Civil War sparked a large wave of European immigration. Predominately Catholic, these transplants arrived in huge transport ships, eager to enjoy the opportunities America offered. Soon, fears spread throughout the North that the Pope was systematically taking over the United States and that Americans would soon find themselves serving the interests of the Catholic Church.<sup>245</sup> Short-lived groups like the American Protective Association and the Whitecaps emerged to try to restrict immigration, remove Catholic teachers from public schools, ban Catholics from public office, and require that immigrants learn English before gaining citizenship.<sup>246</sup> Concomitantly, a large migration of African Americans northward during and after the war added further diversity, and further strain, to the Northern societal makeup.<sup>247</sup> This mass migration and subsequent rise in societal anxiety, according to some accounts, served as an impetus for the Klan's eventual northward progression.

As society dealt with issues of migration, immigration, rapid industrialization, and an increased rate of urbanization, the academic realm was doing its part to portray Civil War history in an overwhelmingly pro-Southern light. Led by William Dunning, a group of historians "systematically distorted the motives of radical Republicans, falsified the

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<sup>245</sup> Paul L. Murphy, "Sources and Nature of Intolerance in the 1920s," *The Journal of American History* 51, no. 1 (June 1964): 114; Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason : Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*.

<sup>246</sup> Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason : Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 81-92.

<sup>247</sup> For an understanding of the scale and consequences of the migration, see: John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom; a History of American Negroes*, 2d ed. (New York,: Knopf, 1956), 440-82.

behavior of Southern blacks, and glorified the Ku-Klux Klansmen as heroes.”<sup>248</sup> Over time, Northerners and Southerners alike grew to accept the Dunning School narrative about Southern Reconstruction efforts. The respectability of the myth of the “Lost Cause” was once again re-elevated, lending academic credence to the notions of a once-noble Southern aristocracy and the “horrors” of Reconstruction.<sup>249</sup> This form of intellectual high cover indirectly aided the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915.

From a global perspective, the first two decades of the new century appeared to be ripe for right wing extremism. Beginning in 1918, Austria was introduced to the Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, Hungary witnessed the birth of the Etelkoz Association, Mussolini introduced the Fascist Party programme at the Milan Conference, and Germany saw the Deutsche National Volks Partei form as the Treaty of Versailles was being signed and implemented. Over the next five years (1919-1924), as overall Klan strength grew to the millions in the United States, Mussolini’s march on Rome signaled the official beginning of fascism in Italy, the National Socialist German Workers Party became a political contender under the leadership of Adolf Hitler and his paramilitary Sturm Abteilung (SA); even Japanese succumbed to the ideas of the Society for the Preservation of the National Essence.<sup>250</sup>

United States domestic politics struck a tone of conservatism following World War I, despite President Wilson’s efforts to stand up and lead new international governance structures. Within American borders, an isolationist tone had been struck, urging an almost exclusive focus upon American domestic concerns. This focus, in turn, sparked a wave of nationalistic sentiment. The growing nativist sentiment owed a debt of gratitude to the Committee on Public Information, a government entity stood up by President Wilson to bolster American support for the war effort. The CPI produced

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<sup>248</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 115. For examples of Dunning School works, see: Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877*.; Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi*.; Claude Gernade Bowers, *The Tragic Era; the Revolution after Lincoln* (Cambridge,,: Houghton Mifflin company, 1929).; or Ramsdell, *Reconstruction in Texas*.

<sup>249</sup> For a summary of competing Reconstruction interpretations, see: T. Harry Williams, “An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes,” *The Journal of Southern History* 12, no. 4 (November 1946).

<sup>250</sup> Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, Routledge Companions (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 16-18.

millions of posters, newsletters, and pamphlets during the war, further stoking American nationalistic fervor. The CPI's "death to the Huns" message effectively created "a home-front atmosphere conducive to political repression and abuse of civil liberties."<sup>251</sup> President Wilson had effectively mobilized the domestic will to engage in and eventually win World War I, but the information operations campaign conducted during the war generated unanticipated, violent aftershocks. "Popular hatred and sporadic acts of violence spread to socialists, pacifists, intellectuals, immigrants, and anyone else who failed to meet the test of so-called 100-percent Americanism."<sup>252</sup>

Similar to the Reconstruction era, 1920s society still maintained a strong belief in scientific racism and the hierarchy of race.<sup>253</sup> Bolstered by the emerging scientific branch of eugenics, Americans still believed in the primacy of whites. The dehumanization and demonization of blacks and "lesser races" played itself out in violent fashion throughout the country. The Saint Louis race riot of 1917, triggered by a union strike, speaks to the blatant racism within America's borders. The bloody affair resulted in the death of forty blacks, and the torching of entire black communities. One reporter witnessed the deeply personal violence firsthand, noting "to put the rope around the negro's neck, one of the lynchers stuck his fingers inside his gaping scalp and lifted the negro's head by it, literally bathing his hand in the man's blood."<sup>254</sup> St. Louis could hardly be considered an isolated incident. Over twenty five race riots were noted between April to October 1919.<sup>255</sup> The following years would see little decline in racial violence. Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921 served as the site of one of the most bloody race riots

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<sup>251</sup> Glen Gendzel, "1914-1929," in Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Companion to 20th-Century America*, Blackwell Companions to American History (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 29.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> For a more thorough review of the dominant writings and beliefs regarding race, see: Thomas F. Gossett, *Race; the History of an Idea in America* (Dallas,: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963).

<sup>254</sup> William M. Tuttle, *Race Riot; Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*, [1st ed., Studies in American Negro Life (New York,: Atheneum, 1970), 12.

<sup>255</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way; the Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York,: The Viking press, 1933), 335-45.



in American history; one in which the role of the Klan is still debated.<sup>256</sup> As African Americans migrated northward after the war.

Nationwide social turmoil was the flavor of the time, exemplified by the Red Scare of 1919. That year was marked by a rash of union strikes as the American economy transitioned from a war footing back to normal operations and fears of an American Bolshevik Revolution spread. The 1919 strike which shut down shipping in Seattle was soon eclipsed when the Boston police walked off their jobs in protest. In places like Chicago, violence somehow turned yet again against African Americans—a scene reminiscent of the 1863 New York Draft Riot.<sup>257</sup> The Roaring Twenties were an era in which Henry Ford’s anti-Semitic rants in *The International Jew* expressed widely-held beliefs.<sup>258</sup> This in mind, President Harding’s promise of a “return to normalcy,” was proven correct—at least in regards to the normal state of American racial affairs and beliefs. The Ku Klux Klan would take advantage of these era-specific nuances to launch yet another campaign of terrorism.

Following a forty-year sleep, it is ironic to consider that what reawakened the Klan was not the sounds of discontent and social outrage, but the applause of millions. On January 8, 1915, a movie premiered that changed the motion picture industry forever. Costing over \$110,000 to complete (an incredible sum at the time) D.W. Griffith’s epic picture grossed over \$60 million. *The Birth of a Nation* was indeed a major motion picture marvel, but as a NAACP official noted, “every resource of a magnificent new art” had been used “to picture Negroes in the worst possible light.”<sup>259</sup> The picture began with stirring battle scenes of the Civil War using the most modern forms of filmmaking and

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<sup>256</sup> At least one account has the Ku Klux Klan present in the Tulsa Riots, this history claims the Klan had been established in 1917 as the Knights of Liberty. According to this narrative, over 6,000 Klansmen were in the city by 1920, many of whom participated in the riot which killed anywhere from 40 to 250 African Americans. There is no evidence, however, to suggest the Klan led the riot. Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 296.

<sup>257</sup> Tuttle, *Race Riot; Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*.

<sup>258</sup> *The International Jew, the World's Foremost Problem, Being a Reprint of a Series of Articles Appearing in the Dearborn Independent from May 22 to October 2, 1920*, (Dearborn, Mich.: The Dearborn publishing, 1920).

<sup>259</sup> Goodwin Berquist and James Greenwood, “Protest against Racism: “The Birth of a Nation” in Ohio,” *Journal of the University Film Association* 26, no. 3 (1974).

artistic direction. Audiences were wrought with anticipation as the first act ended and the second opened with the assassination of President Lincoln. According to the movie, once Lincoln was gone, Radical Republicans took power and unleashed an African American plague upon the South. The movie depicts flashes of “helpless white virgins being whisked indoors by lusty black bucks.”<sup>260</sup> A full orchestra accompanied these appalling visions, playing “hootchy-kootchy music with driving tomtom beats, suggesting to one listener the image of a black penis pushing into the vagina of a white virgin.”<sup>261</sup>

Audiences were horrified by the images and quickly found themselves rooting for a band of law-abiding, hood-wearing heroes on horseback. In multiple scenes, armies of Klansmen swooped in to save the sanctity of white womanhood from “crazed blacks.”<sup>262</sup> Through daring acts of martial bravery, the Klan was able to chase the evil blacks and Radical Republicans from town and reunite the North and South through a spirit of Aryan unity. Fittingly, the movie closes with the army of Klansmen parading through the streets, while “southern families watch them joyfully, relieved that law and order are secure in the hands of those wondrous white knights.”<sup>263</sup> In the final scene of the movie, Klansmen were painted as the sole source capable of reuniting the North and the South after the war—all “in defense of their Aryan birthright.”<sup>264</sup>

As one would expect, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was instantly outraged and attempted to prevent further dissemination of the picture. Griffith was a shrewd entrepreneur, however, and knew exactly how he could secure the support needed to get his picture in theaters nationwide. A letter to an old friend ensured its widest distribution.

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<sup>260</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 129.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>262</sup> The movie actually depicts African-Americans as rabid, often frothing at the mouth. The black-faced actors were directed to run around and let a frothy hydrogen-peroxide like substance spew from their mouths.

<sup>263</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 131.

<sup>264</sup> Richard C. Salter, “The Birth of a Nation as American Myth,” *The Journal of Religion and Film* 8, no. 2 (October 2004).

Following receipt of a letter from his old college friend, President Woodrow Wilson agreed to see the film in the East Room of the White House. After its screening, the President shook hands with Griffith and exclaimed “it is like writing history with lighting, and my only regret is that it is all so terribly true.”<sup>265</sup> Griffith also managed to get the endorsement from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Edward D. White. A former Klansman himself, White was taken with the film, lent his imprimatur, and ensured that NAACP efforts to block it were for naught. Soon, the film was being shown in theaters throughout the country, and was enough of a draw that theaters charged two dollars a head—a dramatic increase over the nickel that tickets usually cost.<sup>266</sup>

Among the millions who viewed the film was an alcoholic ex-preacher by the name of William Joseph Simmons. Known as “Doc” by some (although his self-proclaimed attendance at medical school has never been proved) and called “Colonel” by others (a title bestowed as an honorary rank in the Woodmen of the World fraternal order), Simmons had a lifelong goal of re-establishing the Ku Klux Klan in its violent Reconstruction-era form.<sup>267</sup> Strangely, he appeared to harbor no deeply racist feelings—or at least he was no more racist than a typical white American male of the time. Instead, he seemed to be driven by power more so than racial hate. According to one source, “he cared little about whipping negroes or tarring and feathering wicked whites. But the thought of standing six feet tall or more, clad in a mysterious garb or riding a big horse at the head of a parade through Atlanta possessed and fascinated him. His face took on a smile that has never faded away since.”<sup>268</sup>

Simmons was known as a charismatic charmer, yet he was completely inept at organization, management, and mass recruitment. His early efforts to reshape the Klan reflect these shortcomings. Although his society should have been prime recruiting

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<sup>265</sup>John Hope Franklin, “Birth of a Nation”: Propaganda as History,” *The Massachusetts Review* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 419.

<sup>266</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 127.

<sup>267</sup> Woodmen of the World was a fraternal organization created in the late 1800s which promoted charity throughout communities as well as selling life insurance to its members.

<sup>268</sup> George R. Dale, “Ku Klux Failure until ‘Imperial Wizard’ Surrounds Himself with Coterie of Experts on Finances,” *Muncie Post Democrat* 12-15-1922. Ball State University Archives: Digital Repository

grounds for the Klan, “five years of sporadic recruiting, cross burning, and torchlight parades had lured no more than 3,000 members by spring 1920.”<sup>269</sup> The Klan was running on fumes, a fact reflected by Simmons admission that “there were times when I walked the streets with my shoes worn through because I had no money.”<sup>270</sup> Terrorist acts could be attributed to the Klan between 1915-1920, but the violence was both sporadic and largely uncoordinated—hardly the systematic effort needed to be considered a campaign. Indeed, by all accounts, the Klan was a marginal entity.

Simmons eventually realized his shortcomings and reached out to an organization that could help swell the Klan’s ranks and manage its daily operations. In June 1920, acting on the advice of a rival, Simmons hired Edward Young Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler of the Southern Publicity Association to help spread the Klan throughout the nation. Results were immediate. Clarke and Tyler, who were far from amateurs, recognized the potential wealth to be made from. Earlier they had promoted such causes as the Anti-Saloon League, the Armenian Relief Fund, the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Association, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, and the YMCA.<sup>271</sup> The duo used this experience to develop a sizeable network of recruiters, who themselves tapped into fraternal organizations and churches capable of transmitting their recruitment pitch across America.

The deal was a lucrative one for Clarke and Tyler, as they earned eight dollars out of every ten dollar membership fee from new recruits. Out of these eight dollars, some was allocated downwards to the local organization that brought in the new member. This represented a financial windfall. By summer 1921, the Klan had an estimated 850,000 dues-paying members.<sup>272</sup> Simmons stuffed his pockets with over \$170,000 along with a

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<sup>269</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 14.

<sup>270</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 5.

<sup>271</sup> Dale, “Ku Klux Failure until ‘Imperial Wizard’ Surrounds Himself with Coterie of Experts on Finances.” Ball State Archives: Digital Repository

<sup>272</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 15.

\$25,000 payment for back pay. One source reported that “tax auditors would later estimate that the initial gold rush brought \$1.5 million pouring into Klan coffers, with no end in sight.”<sup>273</sup>

Clarke and Tyler put over one thousand recruiters to work around the country, with instructions to adapt their message in a manner that resonated within whatever local community to which they were assigned.<sup>274</sup> In the South, Kleagles (Klan recruiters) highlighted white supremacy and an anti-black recruitment pitch. In the North, an anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic tone was struck. In dry communities, Klansmen vowed to rid the town of bootleggers and alcoholics. For conservative communities, the Klan vowed to uphold morality and punish those who violated community norms. In this vein, the Klan, could present itself as cure for all evils, an organization embodying the ideals of 100% Americanism.

An upsurge in violence naturally followed the tremendous influx of new Klansmen to the organization. Texas and Oklahoma proved most receptive for Klan terrorism. In Texas, between 1921 and 1922, Klan atrocities became commonplace. Floggings became anticipated public spectacles and, according to one source, “the Klan in Dallas was credited with flogging sixty-eight people during the bloody spring of 1922.”<sup>275</sup> The Dallas Klan later demonstrated its propensity for terrorism by kidnapping an African American bellhop, branding KKK on his forehead with acid, and then dumping him off in front of his workplace.<sup>276</sup> Simmons’ eventual successor, Dr. Hiram Wesley Evans, was among those in this party.

As a whole, the Texas Klan was credited with “over five hundred tar-and-feather parties and whipping bees, plus other threats, assaults, and homicides.”<sup>277</sup> The most horrendous instance of Texas Klan violence occurred in 1922 when a young African

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> John Mack Shotwell, “Crystallizing Public Hatred: Ku Klux Klan Public Relations in the Early 1920s” (University of Wisconsin, 1974).

<sup>275</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 41.

<sup>276</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 41.

<sup>277</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 42.

American doctor was kidnapped, beaten, and castrated for “consorting with white women.”<sup>278</sup> Texas Klan violence would break free of its borders and affect neighboring states throughout the southwest.

The scene in Oklahoma was equally violent. By 1920, Oklahoma (which had only been a state for only 13 years) was known for its rampant lawlessness. It was here that the Klan would use terrorism in a particularly novel—but highly effective—manner. Kleagles in Oklahoma touted the Klan as a vigilante enforcement group; an organization that, according to the Klansmen, would clean up the streets of Oklahoma when and where government could not. Thus, a strange relationship was developed between the Klan and local police forces. Immediately, the Klan took to flogging and beating anyone who strayed beyond societal norms. Scores of “bootleggers, gamblers, joyriders, corrupt lawyers and bail bondsmen, lenient judges, and men who lived off their own wives or fooled around with those of others” were summarily beaten and publicly shamed.<sup>279</sup> When asked to do something about Klan violence, an Oklahoma mayor remarked “you might condemn the method, but the results were entirely satisfactory to our city of twenty thousand.”<sup>280</sup> A judge added, “I won’t defend it, of course, but from what I’ve seen I should say that the night-riders averaged nearer justice than the courts do.”<sup>281</sup> In essence, the Oklahoma Klan became a pseudo-arm of the law.

Following a three day race riot in May 1921, the Klan took up official residence in Tulsa, proffering to maintain the racial status quo.<sup>282</sup> In 1922, John Smitherman, an African American from Tulsa, was kidnapped, driven out of town, and handcuffed to a tree. He was summarily whipped and, during the beatings, one of the hooded assailants

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>281</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 56.

<sup>282</sup> At least one account has the Ku Klux Klan present in the Tulsa Riots, this history claims the Klan had been established in 1917 as the Knights of Liberty. According to this narrative, over 6,000 Klansmen were in the city by 1920, many of whom participated in the riot which killed anywhere from 40 to 250 African Americans. There is no evidence, however, to suggest the Klan led the riot. Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 296.

cut off his ear and tried to make him eat it.<sup>283</sup> This, he was told, was for “registering Negroes to vote in the Democratic primaries and of being discourteous to a Tulsa white woman.”<sup>284</sup> These acts were summarily cheered even by those who were educated. The vice president of the University of Oklahoma, in fact, served as the Grand Dragon for the state.<sup>285</sup> No wonder that, with the support of all segments of society, special Klan whipping squads appeared to render justice.

The “second wave” Klan differed from the “first wave” in that it broke its southern confines and was able to take root and flourish even in Northern states. Strangely, after monitoring and hearing reports of Klan violence in the South, Northerners would soon roll out the welcome mat for the Klan. It began when Northern newspapers picked up on southern violence and published exposes about the Klan for each of the forty eight states. On September 1921, newspapers—both Northern and Southern—concluded their Klan series by detailing 152 different acts of Klan terrorism.<sup>286</sup> Many citizens were outraged and called for government intervention. Congress was forced to act, and immediately summoned Imperial Wizard Simmons to testify. What happened next was completely unforeseen. When Simmons took the stand, the charismatic speaker won over the nation with his stirring speeches and theatrical performances. On the final day of questioning, Simmons closed by saying:

I want to say to my persecutors and the persecutors of this organization, in all honesty and sincerity...that you do not know what you are doing. You are ignorant of our principles as were those who were ignorant of the character and work of Christ. I cannot better express myself than by saying to you who are persecutors of the Klan and myself, Father, forgive you, for you know not what you do...Mr. Chairman, I am done.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 66.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> The University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy, “Former Dean Profile: Edwin C. DeBarr,” *History: About the College*. Located at <http://pharmacy.ouhsc.edu/about/history/deans/debarr.asp> Accessed 15 July 2011.

<sup>286</sup> Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind*.

<sup>287</sup> Congress, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 138.

As the last word left his mouth, Simmons “slipped from his chair to the floor in a state of unconsciousness.”<sup>288</sup> The room exploded with roaring applause, and news outlets painted the Klan as true defenders of American morality and Christianity. This position of prestige was further solidified by rumors of President Warren G. Harding’s swearing in ceremony in the White House’s Green Room (sparking a debate about whether or not he was a member which remains unresolved even today).<sup>289</sup> Simmons would later sum the hearings up perfectly, “Congress gave us the best publicity we ever got...Congress made us.”<sup>290</sup>

The stage was set for yet another explosion in Klan growth, and by December 1921, Klan numbers were well over a million, rapidly growing to a 1924 peak of over four million hood-donning members—a startling number considering the entire American population hovered around one hundred million. Concomitantly—as it had done in 1920—violence flared. As 200 new klaverns were chartered throughout the country, the Klan’s growth was bound to trigger confrontation. According to one historian, “Klan rallies sparked violence in Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas.”<sup>291</sup> Sadly, the wide propagation of the Klan was assisted and accelerated by various segments of the Protestant Church.

Following Simmons’ display in Congress, the Klan was widely regarded as if it was a true defender of American ideals and morality. Although the Klan had heavily recruited ministers before the hearings, Klan leaders were surprised by the support shown by leaders of many fundamentalist Christian churches. Simmons, a former preacher himself, jumped at the opportunity to tie the Klan to American Protestant churches. The Kloran, the Ku Klux operating and ceremonies manual, was updated to reflect a closer tie

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<sup>288</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*.

<sup>289</sup> This debate stems from an assertion made by journalist Stetson Kennedy who took the deathbed confession of Alton Young. Support for the assertion comes from the fact that each of the five members of the induction team were given special war department license plates. Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 236-37.

<sup>290</sup> Lucy Moore, *Anything Goes : A Biography of the Roaring Twenties*, 1st ed. (New York: Overlook Press, 2010). Chapter 8.

<sup>291</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*.



to fundamentalist Christianity. In fact, the opening line of the newly-crafted Klansman Creed proclaimed “I believe in God and in the tenets of the Christian Religion and that a godless nation cannot prosper.”<sup>292</sup> The office of Kludd (Klan chaplain) was stood up in each Klavern, with orders to remind members that “the living Christ is a Klansman’s criterion of character.”<sup>293</sup> The efforts paid off.

As one Protestant minister put it, “I joined the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan because: I believed in Jesus Christ and His church; I believed in a militant Christianity; I believed in the Cross...if there isn’t enough in that to challenge a red-blooded virile minister to a sense of duty, he has lost his vision.”<sup>294</sup> The connection resonated with the public as well. When a woman was asked why she joined a local church, she responded “If you want to know why I am joining the church, I want to tell you. It’s because I found Christ through the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>295</sup>

With a growing organization and an excellent network with which to spread his message, Simmons quickly amassed both power and wealth. However, in November 1922, this power would be unexpectedly pulled from beneath him. While Simmons was expecting another round of electoral support for his leadership in the Klan, former Texas Grand Titan Hiram Evans, and a small circle of co-conspirators launched a plan to “promote” Simmons out of power.<sup>296</sup> Evans was able to convince a large percentage of voting members that Simmons needed to focus on the role of Klan Emperor—a pseudo-advisory position for Klan affairs that positively placed Simmons above everyone else in the organization. Evans completely understood that the real power was held by the Imperial Wizard and, through underhanded play, managed to maneuver himself to full command of the Klan through the November vote. Simmons was left scratching his head.

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<sup>292</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 170.

<sup>293</sup> Congress, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 114.

<sup>294</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 172.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>296</sup> Hiram Evans was a Dallas dentist who initially assumed the position of Grand Titan of Province No.2. In 1921 he achieved the rank of Imperial Kligrapp, the supreme secretary in charge gathering minutes and rosters from all Klan realms. Between 1921 and November 1922, Evans and several Klan Grand Dragons began to plot the overthrow of Imperial Wizard Simmons.

When Simmons returned to Klan headquarters in Atlanta, he found his office already occupied by Evans, with processes put in place to speed his departure. Evans now ruled the Klan with every intent to turn physical and spiritual power into political power.

Evans' vision and strategic decision-making would soon help the Klan acquire considerable political power. One positive result of this political expansion was that Klan terrorism declined significantly under Evans' direction as all Klan efforts were focused on building political networks.<sup>297</sup> According to one historian, "nationwide, Klan votes elected seventy five congressmen, sixteen U.S. senators, eleven governors, and countless other officials."<sup>298</sup> Newspapers throughout the country took notice of the Klan's newfound political aims, noting that "the Ku Klux Klan has now passed out of the amusing stage and has entered the domain of practical politics to challenge our existing parties."<sup>299</sup> Indiana, under the leadership of Grand Dragon David Stephenson, would become the state most firmly controlled by Klan directives. The story of the 1922–1925 Indiana Klan speaks volumes about the Klan's rise in political power and helps also explain the Klan's abrupt downfall. It is here the remainder of this narrative will focus.

The Klan's eventual sway over Indiana politics was tremendous. Indiana was the one state in which each county harbored a Klavern and where the Governor and both Senators were beholden to the state's Grand Dragon. By 1923, over 300,000 people in Indiana were declared Klansmen, a number that represented ten percent of the state's population.<sup>300</sup> At the helm of it all was "The Old Man," David Curtis Stephenson. Stephenson, a lifelong journeyman, had risen to Klan prominence for his outstanding record of recruitment throughout Indiana. Stephenson was widely regarded as a master organizer and showman. He imported real-estate salesmen from Florida to serve as his pitchmen, hosted huge all-day barbecues, and transformed the Indiana Klan into a widely

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<sup>297</sup> Although diminished, the Klan maintained terrorist attack rates at well over ten per year. In 1923, for instance, a cursory review of Klan actions which could be considered terrorist acts reveals at least eighteen accounts of terrorism, some of these accounts being multiple floggings.

<sup>298</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 17.

<sup>299</sup> O'Donnell, ed. *Ku Klux Klan: America's First Terrorists Exposed*, 126.

<sup>300</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 206.

admired organization.<sup>301</sup> Stephenson also stood up a women's auxiliary arm of the Klan, dubbed the Queens of the Golden Mask, which specialized in spreading derogatory rumors about any anti-Klan politician. It was noted that rumors propagated by these women traveled throughout the state with unrivaled speed.<sup>302</sup> Through an elaborate system of intelligence gathering and blackmail, Stephenson soon had incriminating information on almost every politician in the state, as well as an effective method by which to spread it.

To prevent this information from being leaked through the female "Klan poison squads," politicians ran to Stephenson for his endorsement and support. Soon Stephenson was the puppet master of Indiana politics. The 1924 elections spoke truth to this power, prompting one journalist to admit "I am convinced that it [the Indiana Klan] is—while it lasts—the most effective political organization the country has ever seen, not excepting Tammany."<sup>303</sup> Further East, at the same time, a parade was held in Stanton, Virginia to celebrate the fact that eighty percent of city public officers were Klansmen.<sup>304</sup>

In an ordeal that would play itself out in lesser form throughout other states, Stephenson became power-hungry. Following the 1924 elections, he began to take steps to divorce the Indiana Klan from the authority of the Imperial Wizard. Hiram Evans was furious, but in the end could do little to check Stephenson's immense power, although Stephenson's boat was mysteriously destroyed by a bomb blast soon after the divorce.<sup>305</sup>

The date that best signifies the beginning of the end of Klan power is March 15, 1925. It is the day on which "Old Man" Stephenson forced a twenty-eight year old white female, named Madge Oberholtzer, to take a train ride to Chicago. Upon entering the train, Stephenson violently raped and assaulted Oberholtzer. Her graphic depiction of the

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<sup>301</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 222.

<sup>302</sup> Dwight W. Hoover, "Daisy Douglas Barr: From Quaker to Klan "Kluckeress"," *Indiana Magazine of History* 87, no. 2 (June 1991).

<sup>303</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 233.

<sup>304</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 377.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

event best tells the story. “He chewed me all over my body, bit my neck and face, chewed my tongue, chewed my breasts until they bled, my back, my legs, my ankles, and mutilated me all over my body.”<sup>306</sup> After passing out, Madge awoke to see Stephenson hovering over her with his revolver. Oberholtzer asked him to shoot her, but Stephenson instead had his aides escort her to a local hotel to recover. While there, Madge convinced her watchers that she needed to go to the store to buy some makeup. While inside the store, she bought a box of mercuric chloride tablets and promptly poisoned herself when she returned to the hotel. Two weeks later, after receiving no immediate medical attention from Stephenson, Madge Oberholtzer died. Before her death, however, she gave the police a detailed account of Stephenson’s sexual perversities; a warrant was immediately drafted for his arrest.

After his arrest, Stephenson was sure he would be pardoned by his friend, Indiana governor Ed Jackson. A pardon never came, and Stephenson was found guilty of second-degree murder. Vowing to take everyone down with him, Stephenson handed over detailed accounts of others’ political complicity with Klan directives. The details of both the sexual assault and Klan political affiliations were published nationwide. Although Hiram Evans was glad to see his nemesis jailed, he was appalled by the reaction of his supporters. Now robbed of their reputation as defenders of morality, Klan numbers plummeted. Politicians divested themselves Ku Klux ties as quickly as possible. Most importantly, national newspapers revealed the true nature of the Klan. According to one historian, “the Texas floggings, the Elduayen affair in Inglewood, the Kern county tortures, the murder of Captain Coburn, Madge Oberholtzer’s death at the hands of D.C. Stephenson, the Georgia and Alabama lashers, and a dozen other stories stayed in the headlines for weeks.”<sup>307</sup>

While the Klan’s downfall began in 1925, by 1927 state Klans were separating from the now-reviled national organization in order to salvage what they could of their local apparatus. Evans took them to court, but further sullied the reputation of the Klan as witnesses came forward to describe the levels of atrocities and incredible personal

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<sup>306</sup> Irving Leibowitz, *My Indiana* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.,: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 198-99.

<sup>307</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 298.

greed exhibited by Ku Klux Klan leaders. By 1928, the Klan's political power had evaporated, and all that remained was a loose affiliation of local klaverns that bickered more than they cooperated. The era of the second wave Klan had come to an end.

## **B. STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS**

The rise of the Reconstruction-era Klan was fully consistent with structural explanations, since each factor tested was present during the period. For the “second wave” Klan, one of the structural factors—the presence of a left wing opponent for the Klan to define itself in contradiction with—is absent. As for the remaining structural factors used to explain right wing terrorism—a depressed economy, and the return of war veterans—are present, but are not sufficiently robust to explain the 1920 Klan terrorism campaign on their own.

To begin with the supposition that a depressed economy results in terrorism campaigns, it is worth noting that between the Civil War and WWI, the American real gross national product (GNP) more than doubled.<sup>308</sup> Less well recognized, however, is the fact that there was a deep and painful economic recession which began in early 1920, lasting eighteen months into mid-1921. Three different reports indicate a one year deflation rate of anywhere from 13% to 18%, a rate far above even the 11.5% drop experienced during the third year of the Great Depression.<sup>309</sup> At the same time, GNP dropped between 2.6% and 6.3%, depending on one's source. This “forgotten” recession, ignored in most Klan accounts, lasted at least seventeen months, from January 1920 until July 1921. Considering that the Ku Klux campaign took an upward swing around July of 1920, one must acknowledge the possibility that economic downturn played a role in spurring the Klan's campaign. Economic conditions, however, fail to explain why the campaign persisted into the mid-1920s, when the American economy was witnessing tremendous growth.

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<sup>308</sup> Robertson and Walton, *History of the American Economy*, 384.

<sup>309</sup> J.R. Vernon, “The 1920-21 Deflation: The Role of Aggregate Supply,” *Economic Inquiry* 29, no. 3 (July 1991).

Following the end of the “forgotten” recession in 1921, America witnessed some of the most remarkable economic growth in its history. Thus, it becomes difficult to determine just how significant a role the economy played in the re-burgeoning of the Klan. One scholar goes as far to argue that Klan violence was actually fueled by the wealth of certain locations. According to Alexander, the Klan often thrived where there was great economic growth, since “wealth and population brought the usual social parasites” in the form of prostitutes, gambling establishments, and drinking establishments.<sup>310</sup> Since the poor could hardly afford to pay for the services of “professional” women, and since the Klan proposed to fight such immorality, the Klan took root in as many wealthy as poverty-stricken locations. The make-up of the Klan also throws into doubt the economy as an explanation for its terrorist campaign. The Klan had as many bankers, businessmen, and doctors among its ranks as it did farmers.<sup>311</sup> Further casting doubt upon the economy as a key impetus is that the Klan of the times was described by many as largely middle class.<sup>312</sup> Consequently, although the supporting evidence proves weak under deeper scrutiny, the economic explanation for terrorism will be coded as partially verified.

One structural explanation which, at first glance, could be supported by this study is the argument that the presence of an ideological opponent spurs the rise of right wing terrorism campaigns. Even this explanation, however, requires a bit of an intellectual stretch, as it is difficult to pinpoint an actual organization the Klan adopted as its enemy. Multiple perceived threats existed, yet none of them actually organized on anywhere near a similar scale to counter rising Klan activity. What the Klan was able to do, however, was craft a narrative that the United States was under attack from a diverse array of anti-American threats. The 1920s, were known as the “Roarin’ 20s,” an age which began to push the norms of sexuality and witnessed the expanding roles of females as a social

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<sup>310</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 31.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>312</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, “The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930” (Ph D, University of Chicago, 1966). Robert Alan Goldberg, *Hooded Empire : The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981). Lay, *The Invisible Empire in the West : Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*; Larry R. Gerlach, *Blazing Crosses in Zion : The Ku Klux Klan in Utah* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1982).

force. Males became increasingly alarmed as “young women in particular began to chisel away at the double standard of morality that had been typical of pre-1914 relations between the sexes.”<sup>313</sup> The emergence of the flapper, in some ways, served as an indicator of a leftward shift in society, a shift that prompted a counter-shift in the form of the Ku Klux Klan and other conservative political organizations. This said, leftward trends and perceived threats are different from actual organizations against which the Klan can mobilize and generate a symbiotic relationship with.

Moving on to whether the Klan had an actual ideological opponent, an argument could be made that it did with the emergence of the NAACP during the “Red Scare” era. Naturally, based solely on race, the Klan despised an organization like the NAACP and went to great lengths to paint it a threat to society. But it did so by stepping around issues of race. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 scared many Americans into fearing a similar Communist takeover in the United States. Knowing this, the Klan made every effort to paint the NAACP red. In one document, the Klan explained “we believe that the N.A.A.C.P. is a subversive organization, and is infiltrated with Communistic ideologies and should be abolished by legal means.”<sup>314</sup> By tying one of its enemies—African Americans—to the enemy of the rest of society—Communists—the Klan effectively portrayed the NAACP as a left wing menace. The NAACP countered that its members were not communists, to which the Klan retorted they should demonstrate their patriotism and join Klan efforts. However, there are no accounts of a major Klan counter-mobilization against the NAACP; instead, Klansmen seemed to sidestep public confrontation.

In a similar vein, the Klan in the North portrayed the Catholic group Knights of Columbus as an unparalleled danger to society. In a masterful stroke of propaganda, the Klan released what it said was the secret initiation pledge of the Knights of Columbus. The pledge was fabricated by the Klan, but managed to catch the popular imagination of society nonetheless. In its opening paragraph, the pledge has a Knight swearing “when

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<sup>313</sup> Robertson and Walton, *History of the American Economy*, 404.

<sup>314</sup> The United Klans of America, “The Principle of the United Klans of America: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan,” ed. Ball State University Archives (Greenwood, Indiana 1924 (estimated)).

opportunity presents, [to] make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants, and Masons, as I am directed to do [by “Mother Church”], to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth, and that I will spare neither age, sex, or condition, and that I will hung, burn, waste, flail, boil, flay, strangle and bury alive these infamous heretics; rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women and crush their infants heads against the wall in order to annihilate their execrable race.”<sup>315</sup> This mouthful of a pledge goes on to reveal that the Pope has organized a militia and that Catholic girls are being used to infiltrate Protestant homes and report the “inner movements of the heretics” back to Rome. In local areas, like South Bend, Indiana, Catholic organizations banded together to drive off local Klaverns, but since the Klan effectively diversified its targets around the country, downplaying racism for a populist recruitment campaign, no similarly organized group appeared to counter the Klan on a national scale.

If one only reads Klan propaganda, then the argument that an ideological opponent led to terrorism seems plausible. A deeper look, however, takes one in a different direction. We find perception has overtaken reality. Indiana became the state with the largest Klan presence, yet it is hard to find there a powerful ideological opponent for the Klan to rise against. To create one, the Klan had to imagine it. Indiana’s social structure in the 1920s caused one historian to ask “how could a Northern, landlocked state like Indiana—uninvaded by immigrants, unpolluted by Reds, undivided by racial strife, and with Catholics and Jews combined accounting for only a small minority—fall so completely into the hands of the ‘cluck-clucks’?”<sup>316</sup> An unbiased examination of Klan strength and campaign intensity throughout the country reveals that Klan terrorism existed both in the presence and the absence of any true ideological antagonist. In some cases, the Klan openly supported left wing organizations when it suited their organizational interests. Always the opportunist, the Kansas Klan actually “championed the cause of labor” in a community that was predominately unionized.<sup>317</sup> What mattered

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<sup>315</sup> Indiana Ku Klux Klan, “Alleged Knights of Columbus Initiation Pledge Circulated by Klan,” Special Collection 112 – Ku Klux Klan, Ball State University Archives, Muncie, IN.

<sup>316</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 218.

<sup>317</sup> Mecklin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Study of the American Mind*, 97-98.



was whether the Klan leadership in a given location could convince people they faced a menace, not that one actually existed. The Klan never construed itself as being in opposition to any specific group, they simply pro-American, dedicated to preserving the nebulous concept of 100% Americanism. Klan terrorism emerged in locations where there were and were not ideological opponents. Relying upon populist rhetoric and exploiting the societal fears, the Klan of the 1920s was able to paint a picture of an existential threat to America, although none actually existed. This period of Klan violence underscores the fact that a threat does not have to be real to be perceived as one. Due to this fact the actual presence of an ideological opponent organized on a similar scale to the Klan, spurring the Klan to justify its existence in contradiction to it, will be coded as absent for this particular period.

Finally, there is the issue of the return of war veterans. The argument that they are critical to the emergence of a right wing terrorist campaign appears plausible as the American military began demobilization in the wake of World War I. American redeployment home surged during early-to-mid 1919. Yet the Klan campaign did not truly kick off until July 1920. In order to invoke war veterans, one must be able to account for the full year-long gap between the arrival of redeployed soldiers and the initiation of the campaign. Dixon Wecter does so by arguing that it was not disillusionment with war or radicalization that led to the return of veterans being a problem, but the lack of jobs available to them.<sup>318</sup>

Another way to explain Klan campaign emergence would be to say that returning vets, unable to get jobs or disillusioned by the outcome of the war, are automatically drawn to right wing rhetoric and this eventually leads to terrorism. This argument loses support due to the fact that, unlike the Reconstruction era Klan, returning military officers failed to assume the majority of leadership positions, as those were generally filled by men with fraternal organization experience. Although it is undoubtedly true that many returning veterans joined the Klan, their role and overall numbers suggest that mass redeployment from the war was not a primary causal factor in the rise of Klan terrorism.

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<sup>318</sup> Wecter, *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*.

Instead, if we seek an actual explanation of how returning war veterans may have sparked a Klan campaign, we must alter the normal theoretical explanations in a manner that views the veteran not as the fuel for a campaign, but as a trigger.

The public fear of African American war veterans may have fueled the Klan's resurgence. As one historian notes, "White people, North and South, were uneasy about warnings that a 'new Negro,' filled with ambitions for social and economic equality, was coming home from the war."<sup>319</sup> In other words, during the 1920s, it was not the returning white veteran who caused the problems, but societal fears about the return of African American veterans that spurred violent resistance. According to a 1918 military intelligence report, if African Americans returned home suffused with a sense egalitarianism learned from the French, then "an era of bloodshed will follow as compared with which the history of reconstruction will be a mild reading, indeed."<sup>320</sup> As one historian noted, "the mere vision of an African American man in uniform, a symbol commanding respect, could arouse fire eaters to violence."<sup>321</sup>

In some regards, this was not a trivial concern. After experiencing heightened levels of equality in Europe during the war, many African American veterans refused to return to their pre-war social status. Many walked away from Southern society and went north. One historian noted that seventy percent of Georgian farmers reported that at least some percentage of their African American farmhands left their jobs soon after they returned from the war.<sup>322</sup> In any event, because it was white society's response to black veterans that could be most directly linked to Klan terrorism in the 1920s, war veterans did matter during this period, and the factor will be coded as present.

In sum, it is difficult to argue that the structural factors tested here were the leading causes of the 1920s Klan terrorist campaign. Although an economic recession opened the decade, the Klan operated during a time of relative economic prosperity,

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<sup>319</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 13.

<sup>320</sup> As cited in: MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 29.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 55.

bringing together both the wealthy and the poor in the name of white supremacy. The Klan also operated in areas largely untouched by any left wing threat. Appealing to those who cherished good old home values and Protestant ideals, the Klan had no need to paint itself as a defensive organization. Finally, the return of war veterans only works as an explanation if one distorts the argument in a manner that veers away from the original hypothesis. Essentially then, structural explanations factors here carry only moderate explanatory value for understanding the Klan terrorist campaign during the 1920s.

### C. SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS

Sponsorship explanations also appear to support but cannot fully account for the 1920s Klan campaign. Given that the Klan was deeply enmeshed with established political parties as well as in open collusion with numerous different branches of state-controlled organizations, that it had the support of at least two American presidents, hundreds of congressmen, judges, and police officers, and numerous state-controlled media outlets, it is difficult to argue that the Klan was without friends. The support provided by the state, however, was far from active support or direct control.

The fact that seventy five congressmen, sixteen senators, eleven governors, and a President had ties to the Ku Klux Klan suggests that the group was a direct recipient of state support.<sup>323</sup> Worth noting is that of the sixteen Klan-associated senators, seven were democrats and nine were Republican. Six of the eleven Klan governors were Republican, while the other five were Democrats.<sup>324</sup> In a 1924 Indiana congressional election, seven of the ten democratic nominees were Klan sympathizers, while nine of the ten republican candidates expressed their support of the white hoods.<sup>325</sup> With this in mind, it could more accurately be said that it was the political parties that benefitted from Klan support rather than the Klan benefitting from them. The Klan, after all, was an organization capable of uniting and directing a large number of voters. In each state, lists were

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<sup>323</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 17.

<sup>324</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 196.

<sup>325</sup> George Dale, "Parke Co. Has One Lone Anti-Klan on Repub. Ticket: Both Parties Badly Mixed: Good Citizens Are Disgusted," *Muncie Post Democrat* 09/26/1924.

generated that directed all Klansmen about how to cast their votes. Politicians from both parties were terrified of crossing the Klan, and even those who disagreed with Klan beliefs practiced “friendly neutrality” in hope the Klan would not blacklist them.<sup>326</sup> The power of the Klan was so pervasive, it compelled one Birmingham attorney to proclaim “when I say powerful, they took over the state...you couldn’t be an officer, couldn’t win an election unless you were a member of the Klan.”<sup>327</sup>

The fact that the Klan could dictate elections and had candidates from both political parties begging for its support casts serious doubt on the Klan’s need for an active third party sponsor. In fact, chronology suggests that politicians only became interested in collaborating with the Klan *after* it possessed a membership size over one million and the ability to deliver a unified block of votes. Support from politicians or political parties had little to do with the 1920-1921 rise of the Klan. By 1922 it was the Klan that was in position to trade its active support (in the form of votes delivered) for the tacit support of politicians (by ignoring calls to implement anti-mask laws or to publicly condemn the order). Not a shred of evidence exists demonstrating active support—financial, operational, or logistical—from a political party. Quite simply, the Klan played the role of the puppet master, often forcing politicians to bend to its will or face expulsion from office. The explanation that predicts a terrorist organization needs active support, in the form of providing intelligence, finances, weapons, or operational guidance, from a third party sponsor is therefore coded as absent during this period. But before altogether dismissing sponsorship as a factor, it must be noted that the Klan did receive a certain, very important form of passive support.

The greatest support the Klan received was the tacit (although sometimes active) support of local law enforcement agencies and the safe havens that were derived from it. This effectively provided the Klan safe havens from which to operate, as police either turned a blind eye or lent a helping hand. Between 1920 and 1929, according to one historian, “at least forty two blacks were lynched in circumstances suggesting police

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<sup>326</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 17.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

collusion.”<sup>328</sup> In Texas the Waco Board of Police Commissioners were Klansmen, and readily gave their brethren a free hand in carrying out violence throughout the city.<sup>329</sup> In California, almost ten percent of all public officials in every major city were Klan members, and, in several instances, the Klan acted as a pseudo-legal arm of the law.<sup>330</sup> In a clear example of police/Klan collusion, between 1922 and 1923, over “three thousand prohibition cases were prosecuted in Indiana courts through the help of the Invisible Empire.”<sup>331</sup> In return, Indiana law officers—many Klansmen themselves—refused to prosecute terrorist acts committed by the Klan.

As the Klan flourished in areas where it received law enforcement support, so too did it wither where opposed by dedicated legal action. In Texas—perhaps the most violent of all Klan states—Klan terrorism was curbed when the Texas Rangers were finally directed to round up known terrorists. When Texas Governor Pat Neff, known as being “favorable” to Klan activity, departed for Washington on a business trip in 1923, the acting Governor unleashed the Rangers to arrest and begin prosecution of the hooded menace.<sup>332</sup> The same trend played itself out elsewhere, prompting one observer to note that “not until the full fire department of federal and state law had been called out did the Invisible Empire cease to exist.”<sup>333</sup> The presence of tacit support which gave the Klan a safe haven from which to operate, therefore, played a critical role and will be coded as supported in this case.

In summary, it is difficult to argue that the Klan was controlled or manipulated by either the state or an appendage of the state. The “Sterling ideal”—that a terrorist organization needs active oversight—therefore fails as an explanation for Klan terrorism. If one considers lesser forms of support, however, the story changes dramatically. Tacit support—simply looking the other way and not prosecuting crimes—is a form of support.

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>329</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 41.

<sup>330</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 16.

<sup>331</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 225.

<sup>332</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 45.

<sup>333</sup> O'Donnell, ed. *Ku Klux Klan: America's First Terrorists Exposed*, 204.

There is ample evidence that the Klan operated most effectively and violently in areas where it was permitted to do so by law enforcement agencies. The presence of safe havens, therefore, helps account for where Klan terrorism occurred.

#### **D. ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS**

Of the three approaches being tested, the organizational approach helps best explain the 1920s Klan campaign.

The organizational design of the 1920s Klan was similar to that of its Reconstruction-era predecessor. The 1920s Klan, according to the *New York Herald*, was “organized along military lines and the leader [was] surrounded by his chief of staff and staff officers.”<sup>334</sup> The 1920s Klan was a hierarchical organization under the control of the Emperor. Below the Emperor, the Klan was broken down functionally into an operations side—overseen by the Imperial Wizard—and a logistics side—overseen by the Imperial Kleagle. A chief of staff—the Grand Goblin—synchronized efforts within the Headquarters, while a pool of lecturers and national representatives was on hand to provide “education” in any Province or Realm that the Wizard deemed needed extra intellectual indoctrination.<sup>335</sup> The design of the organization also allowed for centralized control of the overall strategic direction of the Klan, but decentralized execution which enabled each local Klavern to decide upon actual operations in its locale. The Propagation wing operated more in the form of a business model, adapting recruitment messages to the local environment and selling the Klan accordingly.

Although the Klan’s organizational structure and its associated decision making processes afforded its leaders the ability to effectively guide the Klan’s strategic direction, this structure presented challenges as well. As one historian notes, “the Klan’s autocratic structure was the greatest contributor to the growth of internal conflict” and the eventual downfall of the organization.<sup>336</sup> Too much power and wealth were concentrating in the hands of a few, a dynamic which generated jealousy and a lust for

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<sup>334</sup> As quoted in: Mark Sullivan, *Our Times, 1900-1925* (New York,: Scribner, 1936), 545-46.

<sup>335</sup> See organizational design chart in: Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 158.

<sup>336</sup> Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, 247.

power among others. Put simply, “the dictatorial character of the Klan hierarchy, based upon the principle that all power should originate at the Imperial Wizard and move downward from him, presented a ready-made opportunity for unscrupulous and power-hungry leaders.”<sup>337</sup> The structure also resulted in the Klan being publicly represented by only a select few. As long as these few stayed beyond reproach, then the organization thrived. When they did not, as in the case of Stephenson’s sexual assault or the revelations about greed on the parts of Clarke, Evans, and Simmons, the Klan crashed under its own weight. The Klan’s organizational design, therefore, explains much about the timing, the scope, and the pervasiveness of Klan terrorism.

So does the presence of strong leadership. As mentioned previously, the architect of the 1915 Klan revival—Colonel William Simmons—was a charismatic man, but unskilled in either management or organization of a group. This was reflected in the fact that Klan membership between 1915 and 1920 was nominal, likely under ten thousand members by the close of the decade. Following Simmon’s 1920 decision to hire propaganda and recruitment professionals the number of hooded members swelled by an over eighty five thousand additional members within a year’s time.<sup>338</sup> As Simmons was primarily concerned with his own wealth and prestige, he offered little in the way of strategic guidance, so, although the Klan operated under an established hierarchy, it functioned autonomously throughout the country. In several states—Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas, for example—the results were unconstrained violence. In others, like Wisconsin, a more fraternal organization emerged.<sup>339</sup> Without strictly defined strategic direction, the Klan remained hierarchical but operated according to what the region allowed, and adapting itself further to each locality in which it operated. This, too, would be adjusted as Hiram Evans took over from Simmons.

Upon assuming the role of Imperial Wizard, Evans turned the Klan into a political machine. He immediately set out to curb unsanctioned Klan terrorism, at times berating Simmons’ motivations and early leadership. In 1926, Evans ranted:

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 35.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 190-91.

The Klan had remained weak, gaining barely 10,000 members in the first few years. Then the possibility of profit, both in cash and power, was seen, and soon resulted in a “selling plan” based partly on Southern affection for the old Klan, partly on social conditions in the South, but chiefly on the possibility of inflaming prejudices. They began to sell hate at \$10 a package. To us that know the Klan today, its influence, purpose, and future, the fact that it can have grown from such beginnings is nothing less than a miracle.<sup>340</sup>

Evans was partially correct. The growth of the Klan between 1920 and 1926 was indeed nothing less than a miracle, but it was a carefully engineered miracle that reflected the leader’s abilities at the time. As demonstrated by the D.C. Stephenson ordeal in Indiana (and as described previously), discrediting the leadership would prove a tremendous causal factor in the downfall of a united Klan by 1927.

The third organizational factor to be examined in this section deals with the manner in which recruits were lured into the Klan. Of all the factors to be considered, this one proves the most fascinating with regard to the versatility and adaptability of the Klan’s message. From 1915 to 1920, the Klan’s recruitment pitch was one of fraternity and secrecy, flavored by a desire to emulate the Reconstruction era Klan. This approach was largely ineffective and, in 1920, Clarke and Tyler changed tactics. These professional Klan recruiters were given orders to sell the Klan however they could according to the particular environment they found themselves. Klan leaders simply asked recruiters to stick to the broadly defined recruitment pitch of “Americanism.” In the South, the Klan sold “Americanism” in racial and moral terms, in the North, “Americanism” revolved around anti-Communism and anti-immigration, and in all areas, “Americanism” meant an undying support to the Constitution—in whatever manner one chose to interpret it. Following Simmons’ 1921 performance before Congress (which generated unanticipated support from Protestant churches), the recruitment pitch changed yet again. A dedication to “old time religion” and Protestant values became the Klan’s selling point, and pastors were inducted into the Klan free of charge so long as they agreed to sell the Klan to their congregations.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Hiram Wesley Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism,” in *Ku Klux Klan: America’s First Terrorists Exposed*, ed. Patrick O’Donnell (West Orange, NJ: Idea Man Productions, 1926), 166.

<sup>341</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 14.



The strange mix between “Americanism” and religion as a recruitment tool changed once again in 1924, when Hiram Evans dropped much of the over-the-top religious rhetoric and replaced it “with hyperpatriotism, militant nativism, and political activism.”<sup>342</sup> Evan’s recruitment pitches, which emphasized the political nature of the Klan, directly impacted the level of terrorist violence while increasing the organization’s political clout. By 1926, in a very unsuccessful campaign, the Klan emphasized “American pioneer-ism” and the supposed virtues of the Nordic race.<sup>343</sup> This pitch resonated poorly among the American populace, and within a year, the Klan was largely an afterthought. One conclusion to be drawn is that, the quality and appropriateness of the recruitment pitch clearly matter.

Key to disseminating an effective pitch is having the means to do so. Again, this proved important for the 1920s Klan. The film *The Birth of a Nation* proved ideal for bringing about the birth of Simmons’ Klan. Without it, it is highly unlikely there would have been the “second wave” of Klan violence during the 1920s. From the release of the film until the hiring of Clarke’s publicity organization, the Klan enjoyed no real form of mass communication beyond letters sent to prospective members or “notices” put on bulletin boards near screenings of the movie. By the end of 1920, Clarke and Tyler had over 1,100 recruiters dispersed throughout the country serving the Klan’s newly formed “Propagation Department.”

The recruiters were directed to target fraternal organizations like the Masons or Woodmen of the World. The size of the Klan increased dramatically through this way, but it was following Simmons’ October performance that “Klan membership increased another twenty percent by December 1921, with more than 200 new klaverns organized.”<sup>344</sup> Congress and the national media inadvertently gave Simmons, Clarke, and Tyler access to a recruitment pool they would not have been able to access otherwise.

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<sup>342</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 193.

<sup>343</sup> Evans, “The Klan’s Fight for Americanism.”

<sup>344</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America’s Most Notorious Secret Society*, 15.

The adoption of a fundamentalist Protestant tone in early 1921 opened yet another communication channel to spread the Klan's message. Seizing upon America's shift to a more conservative form of Christianity, the Klan used Protestant churches to reach yet another untapped pool of recruits. It was estimated that almost 40,000 ministers soon joined the Klan, and "many of them became the Exalted Cyclops of their local communities."<sup>345</sup> Tying into the pulpit gave the Klan access to an untold number of church-goers while simultaneously granting the Klan an aura of respectability. Almost immediately, in light of the potential repercussions of this alliance, moderate Protestant churches began to speak out and chip away at the Klan's self-created image. As one church's administrative committee railed:

The recent rise of organizations whose members are masked; oathbound, and unknown, and whose activities have the effect of arousing religious prejudice and racial antipathies is fraught with grave consequences to the Church and society at large...any organization whose activities tend to set class against class or race against race is neither consistent with the ideals of the churches nor with true patriotism.<sup>346</sup>

Once details of the Stephenson murder—an entirely un-Protestant affair—were publicized and the greedy financial aspects of the Klan became public knowledge, the church based communication-channel narrowed and the Klan began to shrink in both size and scope.

In summary, all three organizational explanations help explain the Klan's 1920s Klan terrorist campaign. The Klan's organizational design made it easy to unify members and compel them to collective action in pursuit of a strategic endstate—whether that was financial gain under Simmons, or political power under Evans. The quality of the Klan's leadership determined the strategic direction the organization would take. The recruitment pitch made a major difference in the size of the organization, while the communications channels used to spread the message increased its geographic reach. Each of the organizational factors tested points to the usefulness of the organizational approach to explain the Klan's 1920 terrorism campaign.

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<sup>345</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 171.

<sup>346</sup> O'Donnell, ed. *Ku Klux Klan: America's First Terrorists Exposed*, 100.

## **E. CONCLUSIONS**

Takeaways from this period of Klan terrorism are: while a contributing factor, the economic recession of 1920-1921 gave way to prosperity and the Klan did well in both rich and poor areas of the country, spurring many to see it as a middle-class phenomenon. There was no left wing antagonist to speak of, as the Klan artfully sidestepped major ideological opponents. The return of war veterans seems at first glance to have been an important factor, since doughboys redeployed stateside after WWI, but it must be noted they returned almost a year before the campaign took off, making it difficult to attribute the campaign directly to the redeployment of the soldiers. Additionally, unlike during the Reconstruction era, military veterans were largely absent from the top ranks of Klan leadership. In short, what helped explain terrorism during the Reconstruction era—namely structural factors—can not fully explain the 1920 Klan campaign.

Arguments for terrorism that demand an outside sponsor fare about the same. While there is little evidence to suggest that the Klan was a pawn for either a political party or the state at large, Klan violence bloomed in safe havens established where police were either willing to help or willing to look the other way. Consequently, sponsorship as an explanation helps us understand where Klan terrorism took root and for how long it survived in those locations.

Most useful for helping us understand various aspects of Klan terrorism during this period are organizational explanations. Leadership, organizational design, effective recruitment pitches, and communication channels all mattered. This is considerably different from what helped explain Klan terrorism during the Reconstruction era.

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## CHAPTER V. WELCOME TO BOMBINGHAM—THE CIVIL-RIGHTS ERA KLAN

*I believe in violence, all the violence it takes whether to scare the Niggers out of the country or to have 'em all six feet under. In spite of what those numb-skull idiots on the Supreme Court say, they ain't got no right to mix with you and don't let 'em! If you have to fight and shed blood, theirs or yours, do it! The Niggers started the war, and when you start a war, you expect some to die. More will die, and you'd better be ready to see that they do. I'm speaking for God, and you'd better listen.*<sup>347</sup>

Retaining a racist ideology at its core, the Klan of the 1950–1960s would prove different from its predecessors in many ways. Whereas both the “first and second wave” Klans had operated under a tight hierarchical structure—referred to as a dictatorship by some<sup>348</sup>—the “third wave” Klan is said to have started off in the early 1950s as a collection of independent and often competing organizations, followed by some moderate but not entirely successful moves toward greater centralization. While true, this depiction is misleading. The atomization of the Klan following the Stephenson embarrassment resulted in a host of autonomous Klan groups which all claimed direct ties back to Pulaski and, by extension, felt they deserved the title of being the “true” Klan. The Klan appeared to be headed for re-centralization during the late 1930s and early 1940s under Imperial Wizard Sam Green, but the strange brew of ideology which Green adopted, combined with his death in 1949, once again sent the Klan into organizational disarray. The majority of Klan violence during the early part of this period, 1955–1958, can be attributed to Eldon Edward’s U.S. Klans, which numbered over 20,000 members at its peak. His death in 1960 led to the further consolidation of Klans under Robert Shelton and the United Klans of America. Numerous other Klan-like organizations existed, but rarely caused an impact beyond the local level due to their relative small size (most had fewer than 75 members). Only the White Knights of the KKK of the Sovereign Realm of Mississippi (WKKKKM) under Sam Bowers and (if the most generous estimates are

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<sup>347</sup> The Florida recruitment pitch given in 1963 by “Reverend” Connie Lynch. As cited in: United States. Congress. House. Committee on Un-American Activities, *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session* (Washington,: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1967), 88.

<sup>348</sup> See: Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*.

considered) James Venable's National Association of Ku Klux Klan could claim over a thousand. While there were forces pushing the Klan towards centralization, the Civil Rights era Klan could never achieve the high degree of centralization found in earlier periods. While not completely hierarchical, the Klan of the 1950–1960s was not completely decentralized either.

A second difference was the Klan's choice of terrorist tactics. The first and second wave Klans favored attacks that were up close and deeply personal—relying almost exclusively on lynchings, beatings, hangings, shootings, and burnings. The third wave Klan, in contrast, often chose more long-range tactics. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Klansmen developed a keen affinity for explosives, as reflected by the large number of terrorist bombings attributed to them. As an indicator of the violence, one account reported 142 bombings between January 1956 and May 1963.<sup>349</sup>

Finally, the Klan of the 1950–1960s largely abandoned its “all-American” rhetoric and returned to a more racist recruitment pitch. This was a message that fell on unreceptive ears since society had progressed intellectually since the opening decades of the twentieth century. No longer did the Klan have an accurate understanding of widely-held societal beliefs or concerns. Most likely this was due to the fact that the Klan had fallen into an ideological purgatory under Imperial Wizards Colescott and Green. Between the late 1920s and the 1950s, the Klan had no real recruitment pitch or stated aim; it was known to denounce fascism one week, and then participate in neo-Nazi rallies the next. Even those who might be expected to support the Klan—populist Democratic governors “Kingfish” Huey Long and James Folsom for example—passed anti-mask laws in their states and publicly condemned the hooded menace. After having his loyalty to America challenged by the Klan in the 1930s, the Kingfish asked reporters to “tell that tooth-puller that he is a goddam lying sonuvabitch” and then threatened to have the Imperial Wizard lynched if he saw him in Louisiana.<sup>350</sup> With the national Democratic party now aligned against them, the Klan was left wondering who to politically support

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<sup>349</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 23.

<sup>350</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 308.

and how to craft a message that could sustain the organization without political legitimization. Lacking good options, it turned to blatant racism, and those attracted to the Klan's racist call seemed already predisposed to engage in Klan terrorist activity. For reasons to be explained, the aim of the Civil Rights era Klan came to be retention of white supremacy, and, in line with these ends, terrorist violence of the 1950–1960s was largely undertaken to prevent school desegregation or social assimilation of African Americans. Due to the overwhelming emphasis on the opposition to desegregation (a predominately Southern issue), the Klan resigned itself largely to a Southern campaign.

During this period, as during the previous period, organization mattered. Of all the explanations given for the sustainment of terrorism, organizational factors have more explanatory power than structural or sponsorship factors. To understand why requires an overview of the history.

#### **A. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

America emerged from World War II as the strongest nation in the world—politically, militarily, and economically. Its position of global dominance did not, however, equate to social harmony. After Japan's unconditional surrender in September 1945, American society underwent dramatic social changes. Many were of our own making. During the war, the United States government implemented media—some would say propaganda—campaigns to bolster American support for the war effort and to paint European fascism as an existential threat. With the war's conclusion and with fascist threats eliminated, government-sponsored media performed a full one hundred and eighty degree shift away from their focus on right wing extremism to the now-existential threat from “Uncle Joe” and Communism. In a relatively short time, the United States went from waging actual war against the radical right to waging an ideological war against the radical left. American society thus experienced a dramatic societal “shift to the right” as the United States faced off against the Communist Soviet Union.<sup>351</sup>

The resultant tone of fervent anti-Communism was further amplified by the fear of imminent nuclear Armageddon. American policy makers largely adopted the “domino

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<sup>351</sup> Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason : Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 214.

theory” about Communist expansion, and stood ready to curb what, theoretically at least, appeared to be Stalin’s insatiable desire for global conquest.<sup>352</sup> By 1950, the rabid Cold War anti-Communist sentiment was exemplified by the frenzied speeches and investigations of Senator Joseph McCarthy.

McCarthyism’s half decade officially began on February 9<sup>th</sup> 1950 with a public speech in which the Senator revealed that he possessed a list of over two hundred Communists employed by the United States Department of State. Elaborate conspiracy theories emerged to suggest that political enemies—from the President, to military officers, to Congressmen—were participating in a Communist plot to take over the country. McCarthy concocted elaborate stories which accused numerous innocent Americans of being Red. With his erstwhile anti-Communist colleague, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, McCarthy launched what amounted to a four and a half year witch hunt; his overreach eventually got him censured in December 1954.<sup>353</sup> Yet, although McCarthy would fall from grace by mid-decade, Hoover would continue to carry on the hunt for Communist infiltrators until his death in 1972.

At the same time, the nuclear race spiraled upward and American society increasingly militarized during the 1950s.<sup>354</sup> The United States invested heavily in defense spending and weapons manufacturing. Despite Eisenhower’s farewell plea to beware the influences of the “military-industrial complex,” the relationship grew stronger throughout the 1950s into the 1960s.<sup>355</sup> During the 1950s, American society moved away from the liberal leanings of the FDR years, while for the first time accepting a sizeable standing army and defense budget during peacetime.

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<sup>352</sup> Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2000*, 9th ed. (Boston, Mass.: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 40-43.

<sup>353</sup> Robert Griffith, “The Political Context of Mccarthyism,” *The Review of Politics* 33, no. 1 (1971). Kenneth O’Reilly, “The Fbi and the Origins of Mccarthyism,” *The Historian* 45, no. 3 (August 2007).

<sup>354</sup> Patrick M. Regan, “War Toys, War Movies, and the Militarization of the United States, 1900-85,” *Journal of Peace Research* 31, no. 1 (February 1994).

<sup>355</sup> Jerome B. Weisner, “The United States: A Militarized Society,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 41, no. 7 (Aug 1985).



The role of women also underwent dramatic change, and although the era is most often associated with *Leave it to Beaver*–like portrayals of domestic life, the number of females in the workplace steadily rose. By 1960, domestic life had changed so much that over thirty percent of married women worked outside the home.<sup>356</sup> While mothers were at work, kids came of age in front of the television set, and television programs began to bring news of the world into American living rooms; over 90% of households had them by the close of the decade.<sup>357</sup> Print media such as *Playboy* came into existence, a harbinger of a number of shifts in attitudes toward sexuality.<sup>358</sup>

While pockets of racism existed (especially in the deep South), white supremacist beliefs were increasingly challenged. Those who dared wield scientific justifications on behalf of racial inequality were often dismissed engaging in logical fallacies.<sup>359</sup> No longer were intellectuals able to promote racist beliefs without generating significant counter arguments. More significant were the demands made by African Americans as they returned from service abroad and sought more equal treatment at home. This quest for civil rights would breathe life back into the Ku Klux Klan.

The year 1929 and the two decades that followed were rough on the Klan. The Great Depression wreaked havoc on Klan membership “leaving countless Klansmen either unemployed or desperately short of cash with which to pay their dues.”<sup>360</sup> In June 1939, an exhausted (but well compensated) Imperial Wizard Evans turned over the Klan’s reins to James Colescott, a far less eloquent or capable leader than either Evans or Simmons. With this transition, even more Klans broke away from the national organization. The Klan limped along until April of 1944, when the national headquarters

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<sup>356</sup> Richard M. Fried, “1950-1960,” in *A Companion to 20th Century America*, ed. Stephen J. Whitfield (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 80. Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver : Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, Critical Perspectives on the Past (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>357</sup> Fried, “1950-1960,” 82.

<sup>358</sup> Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy : Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2008).

<sup>359</sup> Stephen K. Campbell, *Flaws and Fallacies in Statistical Thinking* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.,: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 7-8.

<sup>360</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 19.

was dealt a fatal blow; the IRS presented Imperial Wizard Jimmy Colescott with a \$685,355 bill for back taxes that had gone unpaid since the 1920s. Without the numbers or political support to mount a defense, Colescott was forced to rethink the future of the Ku Klux Klan. His first step was to dismantle the Klan as a united national organization. Although he broke the Klan's structure apart, Colescott did not anticipate that this move would spell the end of Klan terrorism. During the final national Klonvocation on 23 April 1944, Colescott told his followers:

This does not mean the Klan is dead. We simply have released local chapters from all obligations, financial and otherwise, to the Imperial Headquarters. I am still Imperial Wizard. The other officials still retain their titles, although, of course, the functions of all of us are suspended. We have authority to meet and reincarnate at any time.<sup>361</sup>

Immediately, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc. transformed from a single organization into an unstructured, pseudo-cellular entity.

Although splintered, Klan affiliates kept its name alive in their local and state Klaverns. For instance, Georgia, led by Dr. Samuel Green, publicly announced its Klan presence by lighting a three hundred foot wooden cross atop Stone Mountain. In the glow of this spectacle, Green proudly proclaimed, "We are revived...[the] Klan has never been dead and the Klan is never going to die."<sup>362</sup> Several state-level Klans—Alabama, and Tennessee in particular—followed the lead of the Association of Georgia Klans and reorganized on a smaller scale. In Florida, at least three different Klan groups vied for state power, resulting in sporadic acts of intra-Klan violence reported throughout the decade. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Klan found refuge in the South, owing largely to the fact that racial attitudes had changed little since the downfall of the 1860s Klan. Racism still sufficiently resonated with enough Americans to sustain support for the Klan. In fact, the racial situation in the South was so bad that it prompted two African Americans veterans to joke that, should Hitler be caught alive, they should "paint him black and sentence him to life in Mississippi."<sup>363</sup> Although the Klan carried

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<sup>361</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The Ku Klux Klan: Section II 1944-1958," page 1, Topical Monographs, Box 10, Record Group 65, National Archives Building, College Park MD.

<sup>362</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 277.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

on its activities through small operational cells, the 1940s and early 1950s would be known as “the lean years” with regards to level of Klan terrorism.<sup>364</sup> The atomized, cellular structure of the Klan was simply not up to the task of mobilizing or operationalizing any strategic vision.

The basis for renewed solidarity between local Klans would not come until the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1954—a day many Southerners dubbed “Black Monday.”<sup>365</sup> It was on this date that the Supreme Court overturned the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling and declared unconstitutional any state laws promoting racial segregation. The historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling demanded integration of schools begin immediately. Southern states, true to form, dug in their heels while Klan leaders sensed an upcoming opportunity to breathe life into the near-comatose organization.

To combat the ruling, various Southern White Citizens Councils were organized to prevent African Americans from entering Southern white-only schools.<sup>366</sup> These Councils insisted that desegregation broke the “natural order” put in place by God—a belief that showed white supremacist ideology still flourished among certain segments of society.<sup>367</sup> A more laudable secondary objective, however, was to prevent another resurgence of Ku Klux violence. One councilmen proclaimed, “we want the people assured that there is responsible leadership organized which will and can handle segregation problems...if that is recognized, there will be no need for any hot-headed bunch to start a Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>368</sup> To their (dis)credit, the Councils developed many creative approaches for generating public concern over integration, swaying policy, and preventing the Klan’s resurgence. In one instance, Council members handed out

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<sup>364</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 19.

<sup>365</sup> Myra Ribeiro, *The Assassination of Medgar Evers*, 1st ed., Library of Political Assassinations (New York: Rosen Pub. Group, 2002), 28.

<sup>366</sup> Neil R. McMillen, “White Citizens' Council and Resistance to School Desegregation in Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Simmer, 1971). And ———, *The Citizens' Council; Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana,: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

<sup>367</sup> James W. Vander Zanden, “The Ideology of White Supremacy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20, no. 3 (Jun. - Sep., 1959).

<sup>368</sup> Willie Morris, *The Courting of Marcus Dupree*, 1st ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 88.

pamphlets described “little white girls” contracting syphilis from shared drinking fountains. As could be expected from such amateur propaganda, the Citizen’s Councils were soon brushed aside, labeled “white-collar Klans,” exposed for their general incompetence, and discredited for their outdated beliefs in white supremacy.<sup>369</sup> The discrediting and downsizing of the Councils would result in a political vacuum for those seeking to maintain white supremacy.

In May 1955, the Klan began its third wave of terrorism with the murder of Mississippi African American activist Reverend George Lee. As the murder investigation began, the sheriff dug shotgun pellets out of the victim’s face, saying they were simply fillings from his teeth. This “finding” nullified evidence necessary to declare the death a murder.<sup>370</sup> When pressed on the issue, the sheriff admitted that foul play may have been involved, but that it was likely “some jealous nigger” that killed Lee.<sup>371</sup> Making matters worse, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, essentially turned his back on the violence, declaring the Klan “pretty much defunct” and not worthy of a follow-up federal investigation.<sup>372</sup> Contrary to Hoover’s assessment, several Southern Klans embarked upon a period of sustained growth between 1954 and 1958. Led by a red-headed autoworker from Atlanta, the U.S. Klans, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan would draw 12,000-15,000 members and establish Klaverns in ten states by 1958.<sup>373</sup>

Through his personal appeal, the fiery-talking, flame-haired Eldon Edwards successfully united several of the independent Georgia Klans under the title U.S. Klans. Although he could never claim the loyalty of all Klans, he served as a leading figure amongst most Klaverns and could steer the direction of other Klans through indirect

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<sup>369</sup> Dan Wakefield, *Revolt in the South*, Evergreen Target Book, (New York,: Grove Press, 1960), 53-55.

<sup>370</sup> David T. Beito and Linda Royster Beito, “The Grim and Overlooked Anniversary of the Murder of the Rev. George W. Lee, Civil Rights Activist,” *History News Network*(May 2005), <http://hnn.us/articles/11744.html>. Accessed 12 July 2011.

<sup>371</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 388.

<sup>372</sup> Curt Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover : The Man and the Secrets* (New York: Norton, 1991), 441.

<sup>373</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 344.

means. According to many historians, Edwards talked tough but went to considerable lengths to control the violence associated with his group. This was not to be the case for many competing Klans.

In 1957, members of Asa Carter's Klan in Atlanta kidnapped a black man near Birmingham and proceeded to castrate him with razor blades. After passing the removed testicles around in a paper cup, the party proceeded to pour kerosene and turpentine over the victim's bloody wounds.<sup>374</sup> The brutality little concerned Carter; indeed he actively encouraged his followers to follow this violent example. In order to spur his Klansmen to action, Carter threatened force himself. Carter's Original Ku Klux Klan of the Confederacy was renowned for its autocratic rule and willingness to step beyond the law to make its point. Once, directly challenged over his style of leadership, Carter pulled a revolver and shot two of his doubting Klansmen. There were no legal consequences. The charges over the shooting were immediately dropped and the sentences of the men responsible for the castration were commuted by Governor George Wallace. Instead of incarceration, Carter would be offered a job, as a special assistant on Wallace's staff. Such was life and law in Alabama.

Heading into 1958, the Klan could be described as a fractured, competing set of organizations united only by a shared sense of racist hatred. Emphasizing the level of disorganization, a Florida Grand Dragon described the Klan of the late 1950s as "a conglomeration of different organizations breaking up, going together, and not getting along."<sup>375</sup> In the absence of a unified chain of national command, Klan terrorism proved noticeably more violent in areas with strong local organizations. Until 1958, Klan violence was determined largely by the levels of fanaticism demonstrated at the lowest levels by local Klavern leadership. Quite simply, Klans led by outspoken leaders tended to be more active and violent in their operations. In Montgomery, Alabama, for instance, the Klan committed ten bombings in a single year alone.<sup>376</sup> J.B. Stoner, a man

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<sup>374</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 303.

<sup>375</sup> Committee on Un-American Activities, *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 12.

<sup>376</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 23.

considered extreme even by Klan standards (once referring to Adolf Hitler as “too moderate”), managed to organize and incite violence wherever he went; acts of terrorism followed him through Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee.<sup>377</sup> Between 1958 and 1960, Klan terrorism and overall size would abate.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s would inspire yet more determined, more violent, and more organized resistance from the Klan. The 1960 election of a Catholic President—a New England liberal to boot—swelled Klan numbers. Soon after the election, Klan size doubled from 10,000 to over 20,000 members.<sup>378</sup> Organizationally speaking, however, things still looked bleak for unification. Complicating efforts to centralize was the loss of Eldon Edwards, who died unexpectedly of heart failure in August of 1960.

Edward’s widow deemed his deputy, “Wild Bill” Robert Davidson, unacceptable as a successor, a rejection which meant the Imperial Wizard position went unfilled. A bitter struggle for control of Edward’s organization soon followed. Eventually, lifelong Klansman (sometimes tire salesman) Robert Marvin Shelton prevailed.

Shelton, known as a man of action within Klan ranks, soon wowed Klansmen throughout the South. His prestige attracted throngs of followers, and, through his personal charisma, he soon merged Edward’s U.S. Klans, his own Alabama Knights, several South Carolina Klaverns, and numerous other splinter groups into a unified front known as the United Klans of America (UKA). From his headquarters in Alabama, Shelton assembled a cadre of effective leaders to oversee Klan operations within their respective Realms. For the first time in decades, the Klan demonstrated renewed potential for coordinated efforts.

Alabama became the stage for the showdown with Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights movement, and the battle began in earnest in May 1961, when two teams of “freedom riders” set out on buses to test whether desegregation laws were being enforced in the South. The teams immediately found out that they were not. As the buses pulled

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>378</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 309.

closer to Birmingham, bands of Shelton's Klansmen were put on notice to prepare a proper greeting. Shelton handpicked sixty men to lead the effort. As the busses pulled closer to town, police began to disappear. After numerous meetings with local law enforcement agencies, Shelton secured fifteen minutes "free from interference of police" in which the vigilantes could "beat them, bomb them, murder or kill them."<sup>379</sup> In fact, the Birmingham police commissioner and Shelton had already discussed plans about how they anticipated the ambush might play out. The commissioner asked the Klansmen to beat the freedom riders so it "looked like a bulldog got hold of them," then strip them of their clothing so the police could pick up the riders for indecent exposure.<sup>380</sup>

As the freedom riders approached Birmingham, they met and were pulled over by a mob of Klansmen about sixty miles east of their intended destination. After slashing the tires of the first bus, Klansmen firebombed it while riders huddled for their lives inside. As the second bus arrived at the Anniston ambush point, a group of Klansmen rushed aboard and began beating the riders with pipes, bats, and chains. One rider was beaten so badly that he suffered permanent brain damage. This occurred under the gaze of both local and federal law enforcement officers. In fact, as the Klansmen left the bus, a policeman boarded and told the riders, "don't worry about no lawsuits...I ain't seen a thing."<sup>381</sup> The bus then limped onward to Birmingham, where a second round of beatings awaited the riders.<sup>382</sup> Arriving at the Birmingham *Trailways* bus station, the riders were yet again assaulted by fist, bat, car jack, and bottle. The day after the assaults, Birmingham police detective Tom Cook called one of the lead Klansmen and thanked him for "a goddamn good job down there."<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 23.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 298-99.

<sup>382</sup> Kenneth O'Reilly, "The F.B.I. And the Civil Rights Movement During the Kennedy Years--from the Freedom Rides to Albany," *The Journal of Southern History* 54, no. 2 (May 1988).

<sup>383</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 299.

A week later, a repeat performance played out in Montgomery. When federal agents asked the local police to have personnel on hand to prevent violence, the police commissioner smugly responded, “we have no intention of standing guard for a bunch of troublemakers coming into our city.”<sup>384</sup> Again, when the bus pulled into Montgomery, Klansmen boarded it and began their assault. After more than an hour of beatings, the police stepped in to disperse the 1,000-man mob. Medical assistance was called for, but “every white ambulance in town reported their ambulances had broken down.”<sup>385</sup> The only arrests made were of two whites, cited for disorderly conduct and “shielding riot victims from their attackers.”<sup>386</sup>

The civil rights movement would again enter Klan territory in 1962, when an African American military veteran named James Meredith was admitted to the University of Mississippi. President Kennedy did not care to see more acts of terrorism carried out on national TV. Kennedy put pressure on Mississippi government officials and offered federal assistance should it be required. The Mississippi officials told the President they had everything under control.

As the government coordinated efforts to protect Meredith, Imperial Wizard Shelton planned mayhem, calling together his lieutenants to tell them that a black man walking through the doors of Ole’ Miss should trigger “the bloodiest rioting ever seen in the United States.”<sup>387</sup> To mobilize his troops, Shelton relied upon telephone and wireless radios, and sent his call for support out to all corners of the United Klan’s empire—which, according to Congressional reports, spread through seventeen states.<sup>388</sup> In return,

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<sup>384</sup> Jim Marrs, *Crossfire : The Plot That Killed Kennedy* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1989), 254.

<sup>385</sup> Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover : The Man and the Secrets*, 485.

<sup>386</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*.

<sup>387</sup> Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 83.

<sup>388</sup> Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, “Organizational Charts”, Slide 6, 56-432 O-65-7. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233, Box 11, National Archives, Washington DC.



the Klan promised its support, going so far as to telegraph the Mississippi governor and inform him that Klansmen were “on a stand-by alert waiting for your call to protect the state sovereignty of Mississippi.”<sup>389</sup>

Shelton himself attempted to be on-site for Meredith’s first day at Ole’ Miss, but his aircraft was refused landing clearance and was forced to return to Alabama. Regardless, even without their leader, throngs of Klansmen descended on Oxford in anticipation of Meredith’s arrival. Eyewitness accounts paint a disturbing picture of the scene. According to one witness, speakers blared the song “Cajun Ku Klux Klan,” a ditty warning:

You niggers listen now, I’m gonna tell you how  
To keep from being tortured while the Klan is on the prowl.  
Stay at home at night, lock your doors up tight.  
Don’t go outside or you’ll find them crosses burning bright.<sup>390</sup>

Needless to say, the stage was set for yet another bloody standoff. And bloody it was.

As Meredith walked onto campus, a riot broke out. Rocks and Molotov cocktails were tossed between intermittent gunfire while a haze of tear gas overtook all those watching the melee. Two people were killed in the riot, while 166 U.S. Marshalls, 48 soldiers, and 300 on-lookers were treated for injuries.<sup>391</sup> As was expected, police did little to stop the violence. Robert Kennedy remarked to his brother that “approximately 150 of the police were observed sitting in their automobiles within half a mile of the rioting and shooting.”<sup>392</sup> The President was understandably furious at the Mississippi police and their inability (or more accurately, refusal) to either enforce the law or maintain control. To demonstrate his personal resolve, Kennedy sent 3,000 armed

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<sup>389</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 317.

<sup>390</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 301.

<sup>391</sup> Nadine Cohodas, “James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 16 (Summer 1997): 122.

<sup>392</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*.

National Guardsmen into Oxford to oversee Meredith's next admission attempt. Unsurprisingly—given this show of force—Meredith's second attempt was successful.<sup>393</sup>

Resistance would continue throughout 1962, but under a somewhat different guise. Under Shelton's direction, the UKA and other Klans began to emulate Martin Luther King's approach and push a non-violent strategy of resistance. Members of the National Knights were told to refrain from violence and that "our weapons are the boycott and the ballot."<sup>394</sup> Amidst a cross burning ceremony, Georgia Grand Dragon Calvin Craig hammered this strategy home, telling Klansmen, "Let's be nonviolent...we've got to start fighting just like the niggers."<sup>395</sup> Soon, robed and hooded Klansmen could be seen conducting their own sit-ins in protest of integrated restaurants and public facilities. Shelton attempted to downplay the Klan's racist rhetoric once he recognized he was losing ground and was constrained solely to the South given his previous approach. He thus played up the threat of "Black Communism." However, this was too far a stretch and Shelton garnered little additional support from his racist followers when he proclaimed that "many well-meaning nigras know their own people are being used by the Communists."<sup>396</sup> One man listening to Shelton's new pitch expressed a widely-held Klan sentiment and protested "I didn't come out here to hear him talk about this communist stuff...why doesn't he talk about the niggers?"<sup>397</sup> Clearly, the pitch didn't resonate, and, by 1963, a return to a racist ideology proved the strategy of choice.

The Klan's racism would receive national attention during the highly publicized investigation into the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in September 1963. The attack, which resulted in the death of four young African American girls, was carried

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<sup>393</sup> This is not to insinuate that Meredith enjoyed a normal college life. Instead, he was constantly harassed and threatened with lynchings. Federal officers stayed close to Meredith in order to prevent such an attack, but they too became targeted by Klansmen who threatened to bomb their temporary headquarters. In 1963, Klansmen even committed a drive-by shooting which targeted Meredith's childhood home.

<sup>394</sup> Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 92.

<sup>395</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 323.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 324.

out by four members of the UKA, well-known for its violent tendencies. As the nation watched in horror, Klansmen spoke out, revealing the true nature of their ideology. When questioned over whether or not the Klan was sorry about killing children, a Klan leader from Florida responded:

They weren't children. Children are little people, little human beings, and that means white people....there's little dogs and cats and apes and baboons and skunks and there's also little niggers. But they ain't children. They're just little niggers...it wasn't no shame they was killed. Why? Because when I go out and kill rattlesnakes, I don't make no difference between little rattlesnakes and big rattlesnakes, because I know it is in the nature of all rattlesnakes to be my enemies and to poison me if they can...if there's four less niggers tonight, then I say 'Good for whoever planted the bomb! We're all better off.'<sup>398</sup>

As the speaker closed his hateful sermon, Klansmen spotted a couple of African American “spies” hanging out in the nearby woods. The crowd exploded in fury, swarmed the onlookers, and began to beat them. As the police finally arrived—tipped off by an onlooker disgusted by the spectacle—the crowd was getting ready to pour gasoline over the four men and light them on fire. One Klansmen excitedly asked, “Did you ever smell a nigger burn? It's a mighty sweet smell.”<sup>399</sup> Again, the only “justice” served after this incident was a single conviction: that of a black victim charged with assaulting various Klan members participating in the ceremony. Violence continued to flare in Florida, while nightly newscasts brought the situation into living rooms around the country.

By late 1963, despite its best efforts to shroud its ideology in acceptable anti-Communist terms, the Klan had been exposed for what it was, a racist organization willing to advocate terrorism to achieve its ultimate aim of white supremacy. Through increased media coverage of the violence, the nation began to understand the importance and timeliness of President Kennedy's civil rights initiatives. These initiatives would, tragically, gain even greater levels of support in the wake of his November 1963

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<sup>398</sup> Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 87.

<sup>399</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 327.

assassination. The death of Kennedy—although celebrated by Klansmen—would ultimately seal the fate of the “third-wave” Klan.

Four days after the assassination, evoking the memory of JFK, Lyndon Johnson appeared before Congress to urge the immediate passage of the Civil Rights bill. Despite the fact that Kennedy’s initial attempt to get the bill passed was soundly rejected earlier that year, the image of Kennedy’s murder combined with media portrayal of the freedom rides and race riots in Florida were fresh in the public’s mind.<sup>400</sup> Americans nationwide rallied in support and provided the political groundswell needed to carry the bill forward. The bill effectively gave federal organizations enforcement powers, immediately threatening local safe havens in which the Klan enjoyed immunity. Following passage of the bill, President Johnson unleashed a reluctant J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI on the Klan in an all-out war against the Klan.

Although Hoover preferred to focus on anti-Communist efforts and—in line with Klan ideology—saw the Civil Rights movement as a Communist ploy, he nevertheless set out to dismantle the terrorist organization. His zeal was triggered when Robert Kennedy, in what appears now to be a personal challenge to Hoover, sent a special Justice Department team to Mississippi following the 1964 murders of three civil rights volunteers. Hoover, desperate to prove the worth of his organization and not get shown up by the Justice Department team, swarmed Mississippi with FBI agents and turned the focus of his Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) squarely upon the Klan. In an internal memorandum, this initiative was described as a “hard hitting closely supervised coordinated counterintelligence program to expose, disrupt, and otherwise neutralize the Ku Klux Klan and specified other hate groups.”<sup>401</sup> The program, though questionable on a legal and moral basis, proved remarkably effective, virtually destroying Shelton’s UKA within three years.

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<sup>400</sup> Bruce Miroff, “Presidential Leverage over Social Movements: The Johnson White House and Civil Rights,” *The Journal of Politics* 43, no. 1 (1981).

<sup>401</sup> James Kirkpatrick Davis, *Spying on America : The F.B.I.'S Domestic Counterintelligence Program* (New York: Praeger, 1992), 76.

The agent Hoover assigned to head up the White Hate COINTELPRO initiative was William C. Sullivan, a man who harbored “disturbing memories of the anti-Catholic Klan of his childhood.”<sup>402</sup> Sullivan used his experiences as a veteran of successful COINTELPRO initiatives against the domestic Communist Party: “the decision was made to incorporate all counterintelligence operations into one program directed against the Communist Party...I simply redirected the use of those techniques toward investigating the Klan.”<sup>403</sup> Sullivan crafted and oversaw a ruthless campaign of psychological warfare, deep penetration, and persistent operational disruption against the Klan.

Between 1964 and 1971, as one scholar notes, “virtually the entire arsenal of techniques was brought to bear against white hate organizations with a level of success that can only be described as extraordinary.”<sup>404</sup> The FBI kicked off the program by sending postcards to Klansmen that indicated the secret membership rosters of the Klan had been exposed and that “someone knows who you are.”<sup>405</sup> These postcards stirred up internal dissent and suspicion. Soon Klansmen were at each other’s throats trying to figure the source of the leak. Capitalizing on the fissures created by its psychological operations, the FBI created a fictional rival organization, called the National Committee for Domestic Tranquility (NCDT), which promoted an ideology which paralleled the Klan’s but mocked the Klan for its inability to either promote political change or maintain secrecy. Letters sent by the leader of the NCDT—an equally fictional character by the name of Harmon Blennerhasset—personally attacked Imperial Wizard Shelton and openly questioned his form of governance. In one newsletter, Blennerhasset railed that Shelton “has reduced the Klan to a totalitarian organization which serves the interests of the communists...I have never met a klansman who did not love his country, but I have met Shelton’s men who are strictly professional money men and organizers...it is they

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<sup>402</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 341.

<sup>403</sup> Davis, *Spying on America : The F.B.I.'S Domestic Counterintelligence Program*, 88.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>405</sup> FBI Memorandum, Cincinnati Field Office to FBI Headquarters, 5 April 1966.

whom you must divorce yourselves from.”<sup>406</sup> Shelton, understandably furious over the personal attacks, filed a mail fraud complaint against the NCDT and sent the complaint (quite ironically) to the FBI. Needless to say, the complaint was never followed up.

Although the initial wave of counter-Klan programs was aimed at producing psychological effects, subsequent COINTELPRO measures would step over the legal line and aim to operationally cripple the Klan.<sup>407</sup> In order to do this, the FBI relied heavily on paid informants within Klan ranks. One of the most underhanded tactics involved paying Klansmen to seduce and sleep with the wives of other Klansmen. According to one informant who testified before the Senate, “my instructions were to sleep with as many wives as I could.”<sup>408</sup> In this task, it was noted the informant “performed his duty like a little soldier.”<sup>409</sup> Concomitantly, the FBI began mailing letters to the wives of Klan claiming to have firsthand knowledge of adulterous affairs involving their husbands. As expected, a great deal of family turmoil resulted from such campaigns. Greater legal problems arose, however, when COINTELPRO programs began to provoke acts of Klan violence in order to ambush and then arrest those involved. For instance, the FBI hired two agitators to talk a Klansman into bombing a residence. Upon the Klansman’s arrival, he was greeted by FBI agents waiting in ambush, pinned down in a hail of gunfire, and then taken in and convicted of attempted murder. At one point, Shelton became so enraged by the number of infiltrators he threatened “to weed informants out of the Klan through, of all things, the use of polygraph tests and sodium pentothal.”<sup>410</sup>

Although some COINTELPRO techniques were undeniably questionable, the results of the campaign were staggering. Within a year of initiating the program, the FBI estimated “about 15% of the entire Klan was comprised of informants” and that “about

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<sup>406</sup> Davis, *Spying on America : The F.B.I.'S Domestic Counterintelligence Program*, 84.

<sup>407</sup> John Drabble, “To Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The F.B.I., Cointelpro-White Hate, and Political Discourse, 1964–1971,” *Journal of American Studies* 38(2004); David Cunningham, “Understanding State Responses to Left- Versus Right-Wing Threats: The F.B.I.'S Repression of the New Left and the Ku Klux Klan,” *Social Science History* 27, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>408</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 362.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> David Cunningham, *There's Something Happening Here : The New Left, the Klan, and F.B.I. Counterintelligence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 132.

half were elected to leadership positions.”<sup>411</sup> At one point, the Klan was so heavily infiltrated that “Hoover briefly considered installing an informant at the top of the Klan, and thus making Klan policy.”<sup>412</sup>

Although the White Hate COINTELPRO initiative lasted until 1971, the Klan was all but finished by 1968. Its campaign of terrorism was rendered ineffective, as schools across the South continued to march towards desegregation. Hoover, in his letter to the Attorney General, touted his success, stating “we have found that by the removal of top Klan officers and provoking scandal in the state Klan organizations, the Klan in a particular area can be rendered ineffective.”<sup>413</sup> Imperial Wizard Shelton himself admitted “the FBI’s counterintelligence program hit us in membership and weakened us for about ten years.”<sup>414</sup> The Klan campaign, for a third time, thus came to an end. Hoover and his anti-Klan task force had done its job with brutal efficiency. The fractured and defeated Klan would again atomize and go to ground.

## **B. STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS**

The use of structural approaches to explain Ku Klux terrorist campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s proves problematic. Of the three structural factors tested, only one—the presence of a left wing opponent—was present in this period. As will be shown, the other two—a depressed economy and the return of disgruntled war veterans—are absent and, therefore, largely unhelpful in understanding Klan terrorism.

Following the Second World War, the United States was in a prime position to reap the financial windfalls that came with Allied victory. Separated by two oceans from the war’s devastation, the United States became the primary supplier of material for Allied war efforts. Large-scale American industries arose to feed the insatiable material demand. American automotive, aviation, electronics, and housing industries grew by leaps and bounds. In fact, the war was so beneficial—financially speaking, at least—that

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<sup>411</sup> Davis, *Spying on America : The F.B.I.'S Domestic Counterintelligence Program*, 88.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

<sup>414</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 363.

many economists feared its termination would plunge America back into the Great Depression. This was not to be the case. Instead, the United States found itself poised to benefit from the establishment of a global capitalist system largely of its own design. Under this system, the United States economy would enjoy the largest sustained period of economic growth in its history. In fact, the timeframe between 1945 and 1970 is now referred to as the “golden years” of the American economy.<sup>415</sup>

As one economic historian notes, “it became clear to all the world that the United States economy after mid-century was capable of producing enough to provide every man, woman, and child with a minimum comfort level of living.”<sup>416</sup> Compared to the fifteen to twenty percent unemployment rates of the 1930s and 1940s, the four percent unemployment rate of the 1950s was a dramatic improvement. United States real GNP rose at an average of three percent over the decade—a moderate yet respectable rate.<sup>417</sup> Although there was a slight recession beginning around April 1953, Eisenhower’s economic advisors responded swiftly and arrested the economy’s downward trend within five months; the downturn was completely resolved within ten.<sup>418</sup> A second economic downturn occurred in April 1960, but like the 1953 downturn, was not severe enough to warrant labeling it a significant recession. Another 10-month affair, GDP growth failed to drop below 2% at any time during the decline, and, for this reason, neither will be coded as a significant economic disruption.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Robert J. Gordon, “Two Centuries of Economic Growth: Europe Chasing the American Frontier,” in *NBER Working Paper Series* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, August 2004), 5.

<sup>416</sup> Harold G. Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in the 1950's; an Economic History*, 1st ed. (New York,: Norton, 1963), 1.

<sup>417</sup> Boris Pesek, “Economic Growth and Its Measurement,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, April 1961, p. 308.

<sup>418</sup> Saul Engelbourg, “The Council of Economic Advisers and the Recession of 1953-1954,” *The Business History Review* 54, no. 2 (Summer 1980). The shift away from a defense heavy economy – necessary to support the Korean War efforts – immediately hurt the ordinance and steel industries, and skilled labor suffered temporarily until the first quarter of 1954, when wages and personal income began to rise again. A. E. Holmans, “The Eisenhower Administration and the Recession,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 10, no. 1 (February 1958).

<sup>419</sup> Marc Labonte and Gail Makinen, “The Current Economic Recession: How Long, How Deep, and How Different from the Past?,” in *CRS Report for Congress*, ed. The Library of Congress (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, January 2002).



The second factor to be explored deals with the presence of an ideological opponent to the Klan. Here—perhaps more so than in any other period under review in this dissertation—a viable explanation occurs. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* essentially ushered in “the Second Reconstruction Era” for the South. However, in contrast to Reconstruction in the 1860s, African Americans and associated civil rights supporters were better prepared and organized to ensure enforcement of desegregation laws and equality initiatives. In the figure of Martin Luther King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Klan had a tangible enemy against which to mobilize.

As at least one historian points out, under King, “a new generation of blacks was becoming more demonstrative in demanding civil rights.”<sup>420</sup> Their attitude directly challenged the core goals of Ku Klux Klan’s leadership, and, arguably, forced the Klan to respond. As one would expect from a theory that advocates right wing terrorism rises in response to the presence of a left wing opponent, Klan activity peaked in areas where SCLC organizations were most energetic. In Alabama, for instance, the Klan honed in on the SCLC and “ringed in” the major hubs of Civil Rights activity. David Chalmers notes “if a rough four sided figure were to be drawn to include Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Anniston, and Montgomery, the major area of Klan activity would have been enclosed.”<sup>421</sup> Similar to the Reconstruction-era Klan’s violence against the Union League, the 1950–1960s Klan primarily targeted King’s SCLC.

The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) mobilized against the Klan along with the SCLC, spurring the Klan to counter mobilize and direct terrorism at members and headquarters of those organizations. In fact, it was the murder of COFO workers Michael Schwerner, James Cheney, and Andrew Goodman by members of Mississippi’s White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan that brought FBI pressure down on the Klan and, inadvertently, actually assisted the Civil Rights

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<sup>420</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 306.

<sup>421</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 372.

movement.<sup>422</sup> The Klan's mobilization against the SCLC, CORE, COFO, and SNCC indicates an ideological opponent was present and, thus will be coded that way.

As for the return of war veterans, July 27, 1953 marked the Korean War armistice, almost a year prior to the spike in Klan violence. After a brief respite in Klan violence between 1958 and 1960, the Klan reinvigorated its campaign of terrorism in early 1961. Even if one wanted to try and find an association between Klan violence and the return of Vietnam War veterans, this would be undercut by the simple fact that the Gulf of Tonkin incident—which spurred massive American involvement in Vietnam—did not until August 1964, and direct large scale ground combat did not begin until 1965.<sup>423</sup> By the time many of the first deployed Vietnam combat veterans were returned home, the Klan was already in decline thanks to the FBI's COINTELPRO initiatives. Thus, it proves extremely difficult to support any explanation of Klan violence during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of returning soldiers.

### C. SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS

Those seeking to explain 1950–1960s Klan terrorism using sponsorship arguments will be left wanting. It would be a difficult, perhaps impossible, task to argue that the Klan was controlled by the state or that it enjoyed active financial, operational, or material backing during this period. Due in large part to its negative branding during the late 1920s, national political parties went out of their way to dissociate themselves from the Klan. However, if one broadens the definition of support to include support from local appendages of the state, a different story emerges. Again, the presence of a safe haven—derived through either active or tacit police support—provided the Klan with the operational latitude to carry out its terrorist operations.

In contrast to the two previous waves, the “third wave” Klan received very little public support from either political party. In fact association with the Ku Klux Klan was generally viewed as political suicide. Often, political rivals tried to associate the name of

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<sup>422</sup> David Mark Chalmers, *Backfire : How the Ku Klux Klan Helped the Civil Rights Movement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

<sup>423</sup> Fredrik Logevall, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (London: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001), 66, 87–90.

their opponents with the Klan in the hopes of discrediting them. Nonetheless, it must be noted that Klansmen endorsed Eisenhower in 1952, the first instance of a Republican presidential candidate receiving Klan support.<sup>424</sup> Eisenhower was initially known to oppose Civil Rights legislation, yet his administration oversaw some of the most dramatic civil rights advancements, overseeing *Brown v. Board of Education*, passing the 1957 Civil Rights Act, and sending members of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne to enforce desegregation in Little Rock.<sup>425</sup> Klansmen were furious when Ike let them down, and vowed to turn away from the Republican Party by 1960.

While the Klan may have initially considered throwing support behind a Democratic nominee in 1960, the slate of presidential candidates made them reconsider. Opposing the young, energetic figure of Democrat John F. Kennedy was the politically-savvy Republican candidate, Richard Milhous Nixon. Kennedy, a Catholic liberal who strongly supported the aims of the Civil Rights movement, naturally became Klan enemy number one. Although there is no evidence to suggest support was solicited, Nixon became the recipient of an endorsement from Florida Grand Dragon William Griffin. During a nationally-televised debate on October 13, 1960, Kennedy was asked what he thought of the notion that “all bigots will vote for Nixon.” Kennedy offered the following response, which some consider a “sly dig”:

Well, Mr. Griffin, I believe, who is the head of the Klan, who lives in Tampa, Florida, indicated in a statement, I think, two or three weeks ago, that he was not going to vote for me, and that he was going to vote for Mr. Nixon. I do not suggest in any way—nor have I ever—that that indicates that Mr. Nixon has the slightest sympathy in regard to the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>426</sup>

Following the comment, Nixon went on to reiterate that he had no ties or sympathies to the Klan, to which Griffin himself responded “I don’t give a damn what Nixon said, I’m

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<sup>424</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 235.

<sup>425</sup> Robert Fredrick Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights*, Twentieth-Century America Series (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

<sup>426</sup> Gary Jason, “Are Fallacies Common? A Look at Two Debates,” *Informal Logic* VII, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 90.

voting for him.”<sup>427</sup> After the 68,000,000 votes had been counted, Kennedy walked away with the Presidency with less than a 120,000 vote margin. Many felt that “the KKK endorsement [of Nixon] may have been a crucial factor in swinging black votes to Kennedy that year.”<sup>428</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Klan was resoundingly rejected by any and all national political parties. The fact that it was considered political suicide to be associated with the Klan demonstrates just how far the Klan had fallen from its 1920 peak of political power. The argument that an active third part sponsor is necessary for an organization to wage a terrorist campaign is refuted by this example. Lesser forms of support, however, do correlate with outbreaks of sustained terrorism.

The Klan consistently thrived and prospered in areas where it enjoyed legal exemption. In fact, one scholar notes that the 1950s/1960s Klan “successfully turned to violence only where popular and police sentiment granted them a high degree of local immunity.”<sup>429</sup> One need only to look at where the Klan built legal and judicial safe havens to see where the highest rates of terrorism occurred. Sadly, examples of police complicity are plentiful. The lies in collating them in a presentable way.

Perhaps the best place to start is Alabama during the mid-1950s. It was during this time that Sheriff Eugene “Bull” Connor oversaw Birmingham’s police and fire departments as the Commissioner of Public Safety. A staunch white supremacist, Connor was responsible for allowing Birmingham to become nationally known as Bombingham. Between 1948 and 1963, Connor overlooked more than forty suspected Klan bombings.<sup>430</sup> When pressed on the issue, “Connor invariably blamed blacks for bombing their own homes and churches.”<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Chalmers, *Backfire : How the Ku Klux Klan Helped the Civil Rights Movement*, 22.

<sup>428</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*.

<sup>429</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 376.

<sup>430</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 317.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

So intermeshed was the Birmingham police with the Klan that “the Negroes of Birmingham claimed it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between the Klansmen and the deputies.”<sup>432</sup> The most audacious example of this collusion is what happened to the Birmingham freedom riders during the summer of 1961. An FBI informant explained how Connor, a small group of his top police detectives, and the top Klan officials in Alabama closely coordinated the assault on the freedom riders. As the buses approached Birmingham, the police actually provided the waiting Klansmen an update on the buses’ whereabouts and passenger manifests. Following the beatings, Detective W.W. Self approached the leader of the Klan assault and thanked him and his team for “a job well done.”<sup>433</sup> A week after the assaults, a policeman was asked why the Commissioner didn’t send reinforcements to quell them. His reply? “The men he would send out probably would join the mob.”<sup>434</sup>

The link between Klan terrorism and law enforcement safe havens can be found in areas beyond Alabama. In Mississippi, the deaths of three civil rights workers were tied directly to the Sheriff and his deputy. After the FBI was forced to investigate, it named “twenty-one Klansmen responsible for the murder, including Sheriff Lawrence Rainey and Deputy Cecil Price.”<sup>435</sup> FBI reports indicate the three Civil Rights activists were pulled over by Deputy Price and put into a local jail. While there, plans were made to hand over the three to a Klan lynch mob at nightfall. The three were duly released, but as they were on their way out of town, they were again pulled over by Price, surrounded by Klansmen, and fatally shot.

So pervasive was the Klan/police interaction that Robert Kennedy wrote in a memo to President Johnson that “the spread of Klan terror had the actual sanction of local law enforcement agencies in many parts of the South.”<sup>436</sup> James Venable, the Imperial Wizard of the National Knights of the KKK (and Chairman of the National Association

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<sup>432</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 373.

<sup>433</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 299.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 343.

<sup>436</sup> Davis, *Spying on America : The F.B.I.'S Domestic Counterintelligence Program*, 75.

of Ku Klux Klans), agreed, adding “you’ll never be able to convict a white man that killed a nigger what encroaches on the white race of the south.”<sup>437</sup> It was only after Johnson launched his 1964 “war” against the Klan that these pockets of support evaporated. As FBI agents penetrated the Klan, harassed its members, and began federal prosecutions (since local prosecutions rarely held up), the Klan went into disarray and its headlong eclipse. By 1968, under the persistent pressure of the FBI’s COINTELPRO initiatives, the Klan was atomized.

#### **D. ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS**

Once again, of the three broad theoretical approaches tested, the organizational approach to understanding Klan terrorism proves most substantial. We see fluctuations in Klan violence and size directly associated with the Klan’s organizational design, its leadership, and its recruitment pitches.

We can delineate two distinct phases of organization for the “third wave” Klan. During the first phase, which began with the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954, the Klan is best labeled a “divisible invisible empire.”<sup>438</sup> Complete atomization of the Klan down to the local level resulted in at least twenty seven different Klan factions. So confusing was the number of Klans that the Grand Dragon of Florida once remarked “the old countersigns and passwords don’t work because all Klansmen are strangers to each other.”<sup>439</sup> Further complicating organizational efforts was the emergence of the White Citizen’s Councils, intended to peacefully resist desegregation efforts and prevent another outbreak of Klan terrorism.

As the Citizen’s Councils began organizing, one member accurately predicted that the Councils may be “watchdogs of segregation in the Deep South, but when the going gets tough and they need bulldogs with an instinct for the jugular, the Klan would be

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<sup>437</sup> Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 86.

<sup>438</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 276.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

there to step in.”<sup>440</sup> And so it did. The Councils began to lose members to the Klan at an ever-increasing rate following multiple failures to thwart the Civil Rights movement in the South. The WCC’s failed efforts to prevent desegregation had the unintended effect of uniting various Klans into a more solidified, hierarchical entity. This would result in the Klan’s second phase of organization.

As Klan numbers rose, many of the splinter Klans began to merge and form larger bodies. The most obvious example was the formation of the U.S. Klans under Eldon Edwards. By 1958, Edwards had drawn Klaverns from ten states under his control, with a reported membership of over 15,000. By 1960—in the face of a Catholic presidential nominee—that number had almost doubled. On March 26, 1960 Edwards put together a well coordinated cross-burning demonstration of Klan unity that spanned the South. Said an official from the Anti-Defamation League, “the wave of cross burnings indicates a coordinated effort to unify all the Klans.”<sup>441</sup> Until his death in 1960, Edwards had assembled the most powerful Klan since the 1920s. Although he never reached the degree of unity exhibited by either the first or second wave Klans, he nonetheless brought the Klan into the national spotlight and prepared the way for even further unification under his successor, Bobby Shelton.

During a July 1961 meeting, Shelton successfully unified Edward’s U.S. Klans with the Alabama Knights, the Georgia Invisible Empire, Knights of the KKK, and various other splinter groups. By 1966, the UKA could be found in nineteen different states.<sup>442</sup> Although rival Klans still existed, Shelton’s UKA was widely known as the most dangerous and powerful of the group. At least nine autonomous Klans quickly discovered the value in establishing centralized control and eventually agreed to organize under James Venable’s National Association of Ku Klux Klans.<sup>443</sup> Although Venable’s group functioned more like the United Nations (several independent actors having a vote)

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<sup>440</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America’s Most Notorious Secret Society*, 171.

<sup>441</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 305.

<sup>442</sup> Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 22.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

than the United Klan (an autocracy), the NAKKK further solidified the Klan, thus creating a more united, but still three-pronged, racist front. Forming the third “bloc” of associated Klans was Samuel Bowers and his ultra-violent White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in the Sovereign Realm of Mississippi (WKKKKM). Most previously autonomous Klans fell under one of these during the 1950s.

As the various local Klans were subsumed by larger organizations, their terrorism became more coordinated, better controlled, and used in a more strategic manner. Under unified command, the UKA was able to set up training seminars, “led by a former Navy Frogman, who showed them how to rig dynamite, select the proper fuse, and attend the various details of bombmaking.”<sup>444</sup> The Klan’s organizational power was visibly demonstrated by the overwhelming response to Shelton and Bowers’ call to resist desegregation efforts at Ole’ Miss. Operationally, a tight hierarchy produced improved campaign results. Under the autocratic Bowers, the WKKKKM was responsible for bombing sixty three homes, forty-four churches, two synagogues, ten civil rights headquarters, nine stores, and twenty-five other public locations between 1964 and 1966.<sup>445</sup> It is doubtful such violence would have been possible without a centralized leadership structure in place.

Leadership, the second of the three variables considered important by proponents of the organizational approach to terrorism, also helps make the case of Klan terrorism during this period. As the story of the “third wave” Klan opens in 1954, the White Citizens Councils laid claim to the communities’ likeliest potential leaders. Whereas the Councils were made up of “businessmen, planters, bankers, and lawyers,” the membership rosters of the Klan were dominated by “mechanics, farmers, and storekeepers.”<sup>446</sup> Adding insult to injury, “sociologists began remarking on the fact that the Klan had become a collection of uneducated misfits.”<sup>447</sup> In fact, it was noted that

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<sup>444</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 321.

<sup>445</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 133.

<sup>446</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 345.

<sup>447</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 300.



various Klan leaders of the time “are sadly lacking in the essential qualities of leadership... measured by the most elementary standards of leadership ability, the leaders of today’s [1955-60] Klan organizations are a mediocre lot.”<sup>448</sup> This leadership imbalance would begin to change as Citizens Councils proved ineffective in their efforts and people turned elsewhere to combat segregation efforts. People began to look for leaders who promised action. Enter Eldon Edwards.

Described as a man possessed of “a certain force of personality and an almost benign expression on his nicely mustached face,” Edwards quickly assembled the largest and most powerful Klan of the 1950s.<sup>449</sup> Edwards “tried to keep his Klansmen satisfied with strong talk and minimal night riding.”<sup>450</sup> His leadership and tone resulted in a Klan which was (comparatively) less violent than its competitors. Klan leader Asa Carter, on the other hand, urged a level of violence that his hooded followers gladly lived up to. Carter specifically attracted violent personalities into his organization, breaking ranks with other Klan leaders by insisting that “the mountain people—the real redneck—is our strength.”<sup>451</sup> Along with the castration of Edward Aaron, described earlier, Carter’s Klan was also responsible for the assault of Nat “King” Cole at a Birmingham Auditorium, and, later, assaulted Autherine Lucy as she attempted to enroll at the University of Alabama.

Robert Shelton, the youngest Imperial Wizard ever elected, was a mix between Edwards and Carter. On one hand, like Carter, he held very militant views about what needed to be done and was not afraid to express or put them into action. Initially, Edwards dismissed Shelton due to the violence undertaken by his Alabama Klan.<sup>452</sup> But like Edwards, Shelton was both a charismatic figure and competent manager. He knew

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<sup>448</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, Research Section, “: Part III: Klan Organization” page 68. Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, Box 10, National Archives, College Park, MD

<sup>449</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 305.

<sup>450</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 345.

<sup>451</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 61.

<sup>452</sup> Activities., *The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement; Report, Ninetieth Congress, First Session*, 22.

when it was appropriate to ramp up terrorist activity, and when it was best to scale it down in order to support other strategies. In short, Shelton was charismatic enough to attract members, yet savvy enough to know how to translate the size of the Klan into acts of terrorism. Proof of this is that when Shelton was discredited by the FBI, the Klan suffered. Following a successful prosecution by the FBI in 1969, Shelton was sent to jail for one year. In that one-year span, Klan numbers dropped from 8,500 to less than 5,225.<sup>453</sup> This points to the critical role of leadership in promoting Klan activity and campaign sustainment, and will be so coded.

As for recruitment techniques, unlike the 1920s Klan which enjoyed the assistance of Protestant churches and many sympathetic newspapers, the 1950–1960s Klan enjoyed no such assistance. Lacking professionals with expertise in nationwide recruitment techniques, the Klan inadvertently constrained itself to the South, primarily by drawing on images of the Reconstruction era KKK. At many rallies, the theme “the Ku Klux Klan saved the South before, and it can save it this time” dominated rhetoric.<sup>454</sup> But this pitch only appealed in areas of the former Confederacy, prompting law enforcement organizations to conclude that, due to the recruitment strategies used, “the Klan is virtually nonexistent and ineffective outside the South.”<sup>455</sup>

Additionally, the Klan was “shunned by educated people, by members of the professions, and by business leaders.”<sup>456</sup> In contrast to 1920, when churches assisted the Klan’s growth, churches in the 1950s and 1960s largely turned their backs on the hooded organization. Lacking mass dissemination methods, religious support, or resources to generate their own propaganda, the Klan was forced to “recruit its members in two ways:

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<sup>453</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, Research Section, “White Extremist Organizations: Part I, Klan Organization” page 21. Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, Box 15, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>454</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, Research Section, “Klan Organizations: Section III” page 36. Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, Box 10, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 56

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

by secret, personal contact and by public appeal, mostly at rallies.”<sup>457</sup> The results were lackluster, and overall Klan size stalled in early 1961. Unable to keep pace with the recruitment and strength of the Civil Rights movement, the Klan was forced to experiment with a variety of different (ultimately unsuccessful) techniques.

In the summer of 1963, Klan leaders recognized their predicament and called a secret meeting in Atlanta to discuss the situation. At this meeting, Klansmen agreed that “until Klan membership could be increased, and until it could enlist the aid of large segments of officialdom, it would be best to deemphasize hostility to the Jewish race and to Catholics and the foreign born.”<sup>458</sup> Unable to raise the needed numbers through racist rants, Klansmen keyed on the Red threat and attempted to tie Jews, African Americans, and even the mentally handicapped together as agents of Communism. This, of course, did not play well to the established base of Klansmen, and leaders soon discovered “anti-Semitism and opposition to fluorinated water and mental health as Communist inspired can only carry one so far in the South.”<sup>459</sup> Unable to recruit, the Klan began to accept almost any applicant who showed interest. Unfortunately for Klaverns throughout the South, many of these new recruits worked for the FBI.

## E. CONCLUSIONS

The terrorist campaign of the 1960s Klan, like the campaign of the 1920s, cannot really be explained by structural factors. The 1950s and 1960s were times of relative economic prosperity, thus defying the argument that campaigns emerge in depressed economies. The existence of a left wing opponent, in the form of the Civil Rights movement, did produce multiple organizations the Klan could mobilize against and directly target. However, given the mismatch between the timing of Klan violence and the end of the Korean conflict and the initiation of the Vietnam War, there is little to

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<sup>457</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, Research Section, “Klan Organizations: Section III” page 83. Records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Record Group 65, Box 10, National Archives, College Park, MD.

<sup>458</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 323.

<sup>459</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 373.

support the idea that an influx of veterans caused Klan campaigns. Overall, structural arguments prove only marginally effective in explaining 1950-1960 Klan terrorism.

Sponsorship explanations fare better, especially when one considers support from local levels and the presence of safe havens. In contrast to earlier periods, during the 1950s and 1960s, both national political parties openly shunned the Klan and there is no evidence to suggest that the federal government provided the Klan with either information or material. An entirely different story emerges when we consider the support of local law enforcement organizations. Wherever police either turned a blind eye or offered a willing hand, coordinated Klan terrorism surged. Wherever it was actively opposed, the Klan was either destroyed or forced to decentralize in order to survive.

As we saw during the previous two periods, the Klan's organizational abilities mattered significantly. Differences in organizational design—from being completely atomized to mobilized under a charismatic leader—help explain how violent the Klan could or could not afford to be. The scale of Klan terrorism correlates with the leadership styles of different Klan Imperial Wizards and Grand Dragons. The greater a leader's proclivity toward violence (combined with how openly he expressed those sentiments) the more this influenced the amount of terrorism from that group.

## **CHAPTER VI. ENEMY OF THE STATE— MARGINALIZATION OF THE KLAN AND RISE OF THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOTS**

*“Let the record show that Morris Dees is an Anti-Christ Jew!”<sup>460</sup>*

Grand Dragon Louis Beam’s flustered response during a 1981 prosecution of the Klan

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1970s and 1980s failed to wage a significant terrorist campaign, in spite of social and political conditions that seemed to favor one. Instead, the era saw the seeds planted for the later rise of “lone wolf” terrorism and adoption of the “leaderless resistance” concept of organization. As such, the study of the 1970–1980s Klan is considered a negative case, and selected for its ability to help confirm or deny results found in the earlier periods from a different perspective.

Although this period begins less than a decade after the close of the last, a world of change had occurred within the Klan. Terrorist groups such as The Order, Posse Comitatus, Aryan Nations, and the Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord emerged on the ever-expanding radical right. Once the most prominent organization on the radical right, by the mid-1970s the Ku Klux Klan was considered full of uneducated racists parroting an incoherent ideology. The Klan had, in short, become the dregs of modern society. Although the threat of right wing terrorism was prevalent throughout the 1980s, the Klan continued to play only a minor part in the story. This chapter seeks to understand why the Klan was operationally marginalized during a time when it should have experienced resurgence.

### **A. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

During the 1970s, global and domestic developments created anxieties in American society that should have provided fertile ground for a new campaign of right-wing terrorism. At the start of the decade, the anti-war movement was still in full swing, but not for long. The 1968 Tet Offensive triggered a large-scale drawdown of forces

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<sup>460</sup> Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 103.

from Vietnam. Although President Richard Nixon declared a “peace with honor,”<sup>461</sup> what Americans saw on TV told a different story. The United States and its South Vietnam ally were defeated by North Vietnam, with the war ending in a chaotic final scene on the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon. Following this withdrawal from Vietnam, popular fears arose that the United States was losing the Cold War and its standing in world affairs.<sup>462</sup> Right wing organizations had a difficult time comprehending how Richard Nixon, who had once preached the virtues of anti-communism, could be seen shaking hands with Mao Tse-Tung.<sup>463</sup> Following Nixon’s resignation, President Ford’s continuation of the strategy of détente led conservatives to accuse him of appeasing the Soviets, resulting in a strong primary challenge by Ronald Reagan in the 1976 presidential election, and Jimmy Carter’s ultimate triumph.<sup>464</sup>

The 1970s also ushered in a growing unease over social issues. The 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion and instantly triggered a conservative backlash. Republicans rejected the decision, and soon “abortion opponents in some instances became increasingly militant and violent.”<sup>465</sup> Conservative lifestyles were attacked through a wholesale shift in societal norms, a trend which began almost a decade earlier. The first perceived assault on traditional values was the adoption of “no-fault” divorce clauses and the resultant spike in divorce rates that followed. As divorce became more routine, the “percentage of Americans in their forties who were married dropped from 84 percent in 1972 to 67 percent a decade later.”<sup>466</sup> The gay rights movement of the 1970s, represented by over seven hundred gay and lesbian organizations

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<sup>461</sup> Andrew Z. Katz, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Nixon Administration and the Pursuit of Peace with Honor in Vietnam,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1997).

<sup>462</sup> John Robert Greene, *The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford*, American Presidency Series (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

<sup>463</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao : The Week That Changed the World*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2007).

<sup>464</sup> Michael Mandelbaum and William Schneider, “The New Internationalisms,” *International Security* 2, no. 3 (Winter 1978).

<sup>465</sup> Donald E. Lively and Russell L. Weaver, *Contemporary Supreme Court Cases : Landmark Decisions since Roe V. Wade* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 220.

<sup>466</sup> Leo P. Ribuffo, “1974-1988,” in *A Companion to 20th-Century America*, ed. Stephen J. Whitfield (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004).

around the country, generated significant conservative counter-mobilization. Other leftward trends that dominated the 1970s landscape included environmentalism, and feminism. The liberal agenda was vehemently opposed by far right conservative groups such as the John Birch Society

From the race relations standpoint, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s began to achieve its intended effects in the early 1970s. A 1970 Harris survey indicated that nearly two-thirds of African Americans felt “things were getting better” when asked for their opinion on race relations.<sup>467</sup> Signifying how far society had come with respect to school desegregation, over two thirds of all black college students were attending mixed-race colleges as the 1970s began; this marked a dramatic increase from the early 1960s when over two thirds were attending exclusively black colleges. By 1976, only 8% of Americans felt that it was acceptable to prohibit blacks from living in established white communities.<sup>468</sup>

Meanwhile, the threat of a superpower nuclear exchange still loomed large and the near meltdown at Three Mile Island in 1979 did little to allay Americans’ nuclear concerns. The 1979 seizure of the Iranian embassy only underscored how inept the government appeared and a general distrust of government began to mount. One might think these broad societal trends would have proven at least as favorable to the Klan as did those in previous periods. However, the 1970–1980s Klan appeared unable to rally.

As discussed in the previous chapter, destruction of the Klan’s infrastructure was well underway. In April 1965, Congress appropriated \$50,000 for an investigation of the Ku Klux Klan. Recalling how Congress had inadvertently helped the 1920s Klan grow in stature, several Congressmen cringed at the thought of giving the Klan another such opportunity through Congressional hearings. Their worries proved unjustified. Whereas William Simmons shone in 1921, the Klan leaders of the 1960s floundered.

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<sup>467</sup> Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason : Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 537.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 519.

Terrified at the prospect of being grilled before Congress, the Grand Dragons of Alabama and Delaware immediately resigned their positions.<sup>469</sup> There was further embarrassment when Imperial Wizard Shelton took the stand. For years, Shelton had praised the work of the House's rabidly anti-Communist Committee on Un-American Activities. Shelton lambasted all who pleaded the Fifth Amendment before the Committee, asserting that those who did so were undoubtedly Communists.<sup>470</sup> When Shelton, an avowed anti-Communist, was asked his first question, he not only pleaded the Fifth, but the First, Fourth, and—ironically—the Fourteenth Amendments. In a mocking newspaper report, it was noted that “for a Kluxer to take the fifth like any ordinary Commie is poetry; for him to take the fourteenth is epic.”<sup>471</sup>

Congress' inquiry decimated popular support for the Klan. One after another Klansman came forward to expose the Klan's illicit financial activities, the greed of its leadership, and, frequently, they then offered their resignations to avoid further questioning. A furious Shelton was cited with contempt and summarily sentenced to a year in prison. The Klan was made the laughing stock of society, and there was a general free-for-all over leadership positions in the wake of Shelton's incarceration. By late 1970, a Gallup Poll revealed absolutely no positive support for the Klan, indicating that Americans rated Klansmen worse than the Viet Cong.<sup>472</sup> Congress had achieved its objective; the Klan had been exposed and branded. The Klan was comatose, operationally stagnant, and strategically lost for years to come. Between 1967 and 1973, according to one source, “the Klan lost immense prestige, its image as an outlaw organization was doubly reinforced, and a generational change took place within the organization.”<sup>473</sup>

In 1974, the Klan experienced the brief possibility of revival, as a young, educated, and handsome man emerged to try to return the Klan a degree of respectability.

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<sup>469</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 360.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>473</sup> George and Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe : Political Extremism in America*, 401.



David Duke, the new twenty-four-year-old Imperial Wizard was described as “the smoothest talking salesman since Indiana’s ambitious Grand Dragon of the 1920’s.” Duke won over many of the Klan’s harshest critics, as he aimed to turn the image of a Klansman as an uneducated redneck on its head.<sup>474</sup> Duke traveled the country, accepted television appearances, spoke before college crowds, and even agreed to a *Playboy* magazine interview. Upon assuming command, he opened the Klan’s ranks to women and Catholics, both firsts.<sup>475</sup> Duke also focused on recruiting the middle-class, educated Americans. He changed his title from the awkward-sounding Imperial Wizard to National Director, and sought ways to modernize Klan operations. Most importantly, he appointed capable lieutenants to head up operations in various states. In California, for instance, Duke appointed Tom Metzger. In Alabama, he appointed Don Black. Louis Beam headed the Texas Klans, while Bill Wilkinson oversaw Klans throughout Louisiana.

Duke also recognized the importance of avoiding overtly racist rhetoric in public discourse. Duke tried to dress the Klan in the garb of 1920s “Americanism” and promoted the idea that the Klan was not “anti-black, just pro-white.” Yet, his Lieutenants made the pitch difficult. Metzger, for example, made it a habit to carry his Colt .45 while dressed in black fatigues, and Beam proudly proclaimed “I’ve got news for you nigger, I’m going to be hunting you...I’ve got a Bible in one hand and a .38 in the other and I know what to do.”<sup>476</sup>

Frustrated by Duke’s grandstanding, Louisiana’s Grand Dragon Bill Wilkinson decided that he would take the Klan down a more familiar route. “We tried the moderate approach in trying to halt the extravagant gains by blacks, but it failed...Now we are resorting to other methods,” Wilkinson added “you don’t fight wars with words and books; you fight them with bullets and bombs.”<sup>477</sup> In 1975, Wilkinson split with Duke

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<sup>474</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 411.

<sup>475</sup> Prior to this, women could only serve in “auxiliary” units, and were not considered “true” members of the Klan.

<sup>476</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 91.

<sup>477</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 375.

and created his own, violent, version of the Klan, naming it the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (IEKKKK). With a recruitment pitch of unrestrained warfare against non-whites, Wilkinson pulled in the lower classes of white society. Additionally, Wilkinson targeted members of the U.S. military, a tactic that paid off when black and white Marines fought at Camp Pendleton and when crosses were lit aboard the aircraft carrier *America*.<sup>478</sup> Wilkinson also stood up a paramilitary training course for teenagers, a program that increased membership among youngsters seeking action.<sup>479</sup> Within the Klan(s), then, competition flourished, and by December 1978 there were three main strands of “Klandom:” Duke’s media-savvy moderate strand, Shelton’s nervous, security-conscious strand, and Wilkinson’s ultra-violent strand.

Despite Duke’s call for political action and moderation, Klans seeking to emulate Wilkinson’s violent IEKKKK grew in numbers and appeared primed to initiate a fourth wave of Ku Klux terrorism. Even more troubling were alliances made with non-Klan organizations. In 1979, the North Carolina Knights of the KKK—a group that had defected from Shelton’s moderate UKA—merged with the Neo-Nazi National Socialist Party to form the United Racist Front. In opposition to a planned Communist Workers Party “Death to the Klan” parade in Greensboro, NC, nine beat-up sedans sporting confederate flag plates pulled alongside the parade route. As Communist Party marchers began hitting the cars with signs and sticks, the Klansmen and Neo-Nazis—cigarettes dangling from their lips—calmly stepped from their cars, popped the trunks, and pulled out an assortment of weapons. As the crowd began to draw back, gunfire erupted. The incident—caught on tape—resulted in the death of five Communist Party marchers and injuries to nine others.<sup>480</sup> Eager to latch onto the subsequent national publicity, Wilkinson publicly declared “we are the ones being attacked...and primarily by Communists in this country.”<sup>481</sup> An all-White, all Christian North Carolina jury agreed.

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<sup>478</sup> Phil Wilayto, “Fighting the Klan in the Military,” *Southern Changes* 2, no. 4 (1980).

<sup>479</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 89.

<sup>480</sup> Footage of the “Greensboro Massacre” can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8hdNHifoZY> (Accessed 10 March 2011)

<sup>481</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 382.

Despite video footage depicting the cold-blooded murder, all involved Klansmen and Neo-Nazis were acquitted. Said one juror of the Communist dead, “we are better off without them,” while another added, “the only thing the Klan is guilty of is poor shooting.”<sup>482</sup>

Using a faltering economy and the national embarrassment of America’s hostage situation in Iran as a foundation, Wilkinson launched yet another full-court recruitment effort. Seeing the writing on the wall, David Duke—in private correspondence—told Wilkinson he was leaving the Klan and would sell his membership roster to the IEKKKK for \$35,000. Wilkinson, who had secretly recorded the conversation, then published the transcript, depicting Duke as a greedy sell-out, more worried about his wallet than the white supremacist cause. Discredited, Duke now set off to establish the National Association for the Advancement of White People, a political program doomed to fail.

In the wake of all this, despite the efforts by Don Black and Louis Beam, membership in the KKKK dwindled while the membership of Wilkinson’s Klan swelled. The gloating wizard gleefully proclaimed “I wiped him [Duke] out, now I’ve got ninety five percent of the Klansmen in the country.”<sup>483</sup> Though his financial resources were limited, Wilkinson now had a manpower base of around 9,000 with which to launch another surge of terrorism. In order to train this growing mass, Wilkinson created Camp My Lai in Alabama where Klansmen received paramilitary weapons and explosives training. While their parents were away, “Ku Klux Kids” summer camps were offered to teach youngsters the basics of weapons handling and Klan ideology. By early 1980, news of these training camps and increased Klan activity caught the ear of a southern lawyer named Morris Dees, and in response, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) launched a Klanwatch program by year’s end.

Ironically, what first broke the Klan’s momentum were media reports that Wilkinson himself had been an active FBI informant since the early 1970s. As members of Wilkinson’s IEKKKK walked away in disgust, betrayed by the Wizard who had been

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<sup>482</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 288.

<sup>483</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 390.

urging them to violence all along, a new form of counter terror effort further crippled Klans throughout the nation. In March 1981, at the request of several terrorized Vietnamese shrimpers, Morris Dees and the SPLC took the KKKK's Grand Dragon, Louis Beam, and his Texas Klan to court.

Asked by local white fisherman in the Galveston area to intervene on their behalf to help drive away Vietnamese competition, Louis Beam brought his Texas Klan to the Gulf area. The Galveston Vietnamese community was soon victimized by constant Klan harassment and intimidation, receiving night letters warning them of violence while crosses burned in their front yards. When local law enforcement failed to follow up on complaints, the Vietnamese elders reached out to the SPLC in a last ditch effort to stop harassment by the Klan. Dees agreed to assist, and immediately filed suit against Beam and his Texas Klan.

Before the case went to court, Beam and his Klansmen ratcheted up their levels of intimidation in an effort to scare the Vietnamese away from their legal strategy. Crosses were burned in the fisherman's yards, boats were set afire, and threatening calls were made to local marina workers who supported the Vietnamese fishermen. Business cards were left outside of any business with ties to the Vietnamese fishermen that chillingly announced "YOU HAVE BEEN PAID A SOCIAL VISIT BY THE KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN—DON'T MAKE THE NEXT VISIT A BUSINESS CALL."<sup>484</sup> This strategy of overt intimidation nearly worked. Under pressure, the Vietnamese elders called Dees and told him they had decided not to prosecute. Undaunted, Dees met with the shrimpers and convinced them it was in their best interests to push forward with legal action. With the compliance of the Vietnamese community, Dees took Beam to court over a Texas state law which forbids paramilitary training within its borders. When asked about the Klan and its purpose, Beam denied running a paramilitary unit and continued to assert the Klan was simply a patriotic organization. Unfortunately for Beam, after Dees presented video evidence and a clip in which Beam himself instructed

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<sup>484</sup> Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 98.

students how to effectively kill enemies in an ambush, the judge ordered the Texas Klan disbanded. A furious Beam shut down his Klan, renounced his Klan membership, and moved to Idaho.<sup>485</sup>

With this precedent, the SPLC turned its sights on the remnants of Wilkinson's Klan with the intent of shutting down the My Lai training camp. Realizing he did not have the funds to defend himself in court, Wilkinson closed the camp of his own accord. This was not sufficient for the SPLC. Lawyers began filing injunctions against Wilkinson's organization, triggering a costly legal battle for the Klan. In private correspondence to his followers, Wilkinson "begged for funds, saying that the Klanwatch suit was costing the Empire between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per month."<sup>486</sup> Rather than support their disgraced Imperial Wizard, many Klansmen walked away or agreed to provide information to Klanwatch lawyers. Wilkinson's Klan tried one last desperate act of terror, firebombing the offices of the SPLC in 1983. Though the bombing caused significant damage, no court documents were lost, and the SPLC received an influx of donations which allowed it to construct a new, fireproof, bombproof building from which to operate.

In May 1984, a grand jury handed down nine indictments to Klan leaders for obstruction of justice. Alongside the SPLC, the Anti-Klan Network (later renamed the Center for Democratic Renewal) and the Anti-Defamation League kept constant surveillance and unremitting legal pressure on Klaverns scattered across the country. Legal defeats would prove to be the theme during the 1980s. In 1987, the SPLC won a \$7,000,000 case against Robert Shelton's United Klans of America, bankrupting it, and forcing the UKA to disband; the headquarters of the UKA was given to the mother of an African-American victim of Klan terrorism. Needless to say, Shelton was livid when he realized that the physical hub of the most powerful Klan was now owned by an elderly black woman. In 1988, the SPLC shut down what was left of the IEKKKK with a \$1,000,000 verdict against Wilkinson's former Klan.

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<sup>485</sup> A detailed description of the court proceedings can be found in: Dees and Corcoran, *Gathering Storm : America's Militia Threat*, 36-40.

<sup>486</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 395.

The constant pressure of watchdog groups combined with effective law enforcement penetration decimated the Klans' leadership ranks, tempered its violence, and forced alliances to dissolve. The trend of Klan unification begun in 1979 reversed course, and, by the mid-1980s, Klan reach and violence was limited to sporadic, uncoordinated acts of local terrorism. Adding insult to injury, the Klan became the laughingstock of right wing extremist organizations. As Bill Stanton—a plank owner of the Klanwatch program—points out, “perhaps the most telling commentary of the Ku Klux Klan’s status as the last decade of the twentieth century began to unfold was that other, more radical white supremacists had begun to ridicule it openly.”<sup>487</sup> The branding of the Klan would not end racist violence. In fact, an unforeseen consequence of effective watchdog pressure was the slow morphing of the Klan name and structure into organizations that would come to be associated with the Christian Patriot movement.

As the Klan took its legal beatings, mass defections depleted the group. After walking away, most Klansmen retained their racist beliefs and sought alternative outlets in order to express them. If these outlets were unavailable, many created their own. Take, for instance, Don Black, who had served as David Duke’s Grand Dragon in Alabama. Following the 1980 public disgrace of Duke, Black assumed the vacant Imperial Wizard position. Instead of focusing on the Klan’s organization and strategy, Black enlisted the help of nine others and set off for Dominica in a doomed attempt to invade and conquer the small Caribbean island. Black received three years of prison time for his attempt. Following his release, he set up the ultra-popular White Nationalist website *Stormfront.org*.<sup>488</sup> Today, this website is known for helping to expand the base of white nationalism, in effect turning white nationalism into white internationalism.

Louis Beam was another former Klan leader who took his racist beliefs into other venues. After his courtroom disaster, Beam closed shop on his Texas Klan, headed north to Idaho, and met with Reverend Richard Butler to discuss plans for the expansion of an organization known as Aryan Nations. As the “ambassador at large” for Aryan Nations,

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<sup>487</sup> Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 266.

<sup>488</sup> Julie Etchingham, “Hate.Com Expands on the Net,” *BBC News* (January 12, 2000), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/600876.stm>. Accessed 15 August 2011.

Beam recruited throughout the country. Beam also created one of the first virtual collaboration sites on the militant right wing by standing up of the Aryan Nations Liberty Net. After breaking with Aryan Nations in the late 1980s, Beam maintained a strong web presence, calling on all Patriots to adopt a strategy of leaderless resistance and spontaneously take up arms against the American government. Beam maintains a website even today that continues to inspire those on the radical right.

Tom Metzger, another of David Duke's Grand Dragons, officially cut ties with the Klan in 1982 under considerable legal pressure. Following an abortive run for the U.S. Senate, Metzger returned to his California home, fell in with the burgeoning Neo-Nazi crowd, and built the foundations for an organization called WAR—an acronym standing for White Aryan Resistance. True to Neo-Nazi form, Metzger promised to put "blood on the streets like you've never seen" and "advocate more violence than both world wars put together."<sup>489</sup> Still "one of the most notorious white supremacists in the United States," Metzger would become a cult hero for Americans on the extremist right.<sup>490</sup> Even Hollywood took note, as Metzger's ultra-violent tones and leadership style served as the inspiration for the neo-Nazi leader portrayed by Stacy Keach in the movie *American History X*.

The mass defections from the Klan were not limited to its leaders. Like rats from a sinking ship, rank and file members deserted Klaverns in droves, often joining other extremist groups possessing parallel ideologies. In fact, a notable feature of right wing terrorism in the 1980s and early 1990s was the preponderance of *ex*-Klansmen involved in terrorist activity. In 1983, for instance, Robert Jay Mathews formed an ultra-violent organization known as *Brüder Schweigen* (The Silent Brotherhood), known soon thereafter as The Order. Seven Klansmen formed the core of this group, and, over the course of a year, The Order went on a bombing, counterfeiting, murder, and arson spree that would net the group over \$4,000,000. Before they were brought to justice (or killed in Mathews' case), The Order helped support right wing extremism nationwide, making

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<sup>489</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 78.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

significant donations to Klan associates Louis Beam (\$100K), Robert Miles (\$15K), Frazier Glenn Miller (\$200K), and Tom Metzger (\$260K-\$300K).<sup>491</sup>

Frazier Glenn Miller, a former Army Special Forces soldier, defected from the Klan and stood up the White Patriot Party in the early 1980s. In 1984 he lost a bid for Governor of North Carolina; two years later, he would experience defeat in his Senate run as well. His political activity barely masked his paramilitary activities. Altering his rhetoric from racist to anti-Semitic anti-government militia speak, Miller purchased weapons and relied on a few active-duty military friends to train his Patriot militia.<sup>492</sup> Brought to court a second time for threatening to bomb Morris Dees and declaring war on the ZOG, Miller turned state's evidence, returned the money from The Order's bank heists, and received a five year jail sentence.

As Klansmen walked away from their respective Klaverns in the early and mid-1980s, William Potter Gale's Posse Comitatus drew Klansmen into its ranks with a flexible anti-Semitic, Christian Identity-based ideology.<sup>493</sup> A former Klansman himself, Gale would build the base of what would become the Christian Patriot movement—a movement which spawned Oklahoma City bomber (and former Klansman) Timothy McVeigh.<sup>494</sup> The Posse seized upon the huge farm crisis plaguing the country during the 1980s, drawing farmers into a belief system that preached violence against what it purported to be a Jewish-controlled government. “Scattered Posse units attracted klansmen, neo-Nazis, Identity cultists, tax-dodgers, and disaffected farmers” and merged them underneath the Posse's broad ideological tent.<sup>495</sup> The popularity of the Posse

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<sup>491</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 185.

<sup>492</sup> Dees and Corcoran, *Gathering Storm : America's Militia Threat*, 97.

<sup>493</sup> For an overview of Posse Comitatus beliefs, see: James Corcoran, *Bitter Harvest : Gordon Kahl and the Posse Comitatus-Murder in the Heartland* (New York, N.Y., USA.: Viking, 1990), 26-30.

<sup>494</sup> Concerning Gale's affiliation with the Klan, see: Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door : The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*, 1st ed. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2002), 94-95.

<sup>495</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*.



during the 1980s reflected a growing trend: the willingness of Klansmen to shed or downplay Klan affiliations and adopt the identity of “Christian Patriots.”

By 1985, the Ku Klux Klan was struggling to survive. Staggering losses in courtrooms throughout the country decimated the organization and served as a deterrent to any Klan chapter attempting to engage in illicit activities. From a peak of 11,000 members in 1981, the Klan could claim fewer than 5,000 by the close of the decade. The Klan would claim fewer than 1,500 members by the mid-1990s.<sup>496</sup> Fearful of judicial repercussions, Klan leaders toned down their violent rhetoric, urged peaceful and legal resistance, and did everything possible to distance themselves from their more violence-prone followers. Now viewed as “plodding, cowardly, even foolish” by the end of the 1980s, the Ku Klux Klan “came to be viewed as outdated and out of touch, all talk and no action.”<sup>497</sup> Unfortunately, as noted by watchdog organizations, “if the Klan’s numbers were dropping, its terrorist philosophy was still influencing the [racist right wing] extremist movement.”<sup>498</sup> Paramilitary groups, neo-Nazi skinheads, and small, compartmentalized terrorist organizations benefitted from the Klan’s rhetorical turn from violence and these “Patriot” groups began to collect former Klansmen with an appetite for violence.

The rise of the Christian Patriots can, in many ways, be attributed to the demise of the Ku Klux Klan. Unable to keep its members satisfied, the Klan was drained of its strength, size, and overall power. With its recruitment efforts severely constrained by watchdog groups, the Klan lost many of its most willing future terrorists to groups espousing anti-government rhetoric. This includes the individual considered America’s most notorious domestic terrorist; Timothy McVeigh was a Klansmen between 1990-1991 while on active duty in the United States Army.<sup>499</sup> Unhappy with Klan ideology and organization, McVeigh walked away and began his associations with multiple anti-

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<sup>496</sup> Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 265.

<sup>497</sup> Klanwatch Project, “Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence,” in *SPLC Special Report*, ed. Southern Poverty Law Center (Montgomery, AL2011), 48.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>499</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 274.

government Patriot organizations. These associations eventually led to the April 19, 1995 death of 168 people in Oklahoma City.

Discredited by its past and unable to escape the constant pressure applied by watchdog groups, the Ku Klux Klan was pushed into the background of the radical right movement during the 1980s. As of the writing of this dissertation, the Klan has been unable to escape the branding that has been applied to it. Although it once claimed men of stature, the Klan is now viewed as an organization of uneducated buffoons. It remains a marginalized entity in modern society. Unfortunately, as previous history indicates, the Ku Klux Klan is unlikely to vanish altogether and, even today, cross lightings occur at which Klansmen still rally and chant “behold, the fiery cross still brilliant, all the troubled history failed to quench its hallowed flame.”<sup>500</sup>

## **B. STRUCTURAL EXPLANATIONS**

To analyze the Klan during this period, what must be kept in mind is that the 1980s Ku Klux Klan represents an organization (or organizations) that failed to launch a successful campaign. Therefore, as factors are analyzed, we must remember we are seeking to explain a negative case. Analysis must therefore be approached from a different angle. Of importance here are instances where theory would anticipate a surge in Klan terrorism, but where none materialized.

As in the previous three periods, the first structural factor to be considered is the state of the American economy. If the period between 1945 and 1970 could be called America’s economic golden years, the following decade represents its antithesis. Still enmeshed in the Vietnam War during the early 1970s, the American economy suffered massive rates of inflation while unemployment crept up around eight percent—a phenomenon dubbed the great stagflation. Between November 1973 and March 1975, the United States economy suffered what some called “the most serious [recession] since

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<sup>500</sup> Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 40.

1937.”<sup>501</sup> Lasting seventeen months, the recession pushed GDP down by 3% to 5%, an economic calamity generally attributed to the 1973 oil crisis.<sup>502</sup>

The 1973 OPEC oil embargo pushed energy costs higher while the American economy sagged further still under the weight of Vietnam War expenditures. Recovery began in mid-1975, but, by 1979, national economic growth was again stagnant, unemployment was rising, and inflation was through the roof. The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, considered by some a punishment vote against Carter and the Democratic Party, did little to immediately rectify the economic situation.<sup>503</sup> For almost two years after assuming the presidency, Reagan’s economic policy was met with yet another deep economic recession.<sup>504</sup> This sixteen month recession, from July 1981 to November 1982, pushed GDP growth rates down close to, but not over, 3%. Only by 1982, did the economy begin a steady recovery, propelling Reagan to a landslide second-term election.

If the structural argument that economic recessions result in right wing surges held true, we should expect to see the activities or membership of the Ku Klux Klan grow as early as 1971 and especially in 1973 and 1980. But this did not occur. As Christopher Hewitt indicates, Klan violence peaked around 1964 and then tapered off to almost nothing by the mid-1970s.<sup>505</sup> A membership surge occurred around 1974, but the timing suggests it was primarily in response to the efforts of the charming new Imperial Wizard David Duke, and his whirlwind media campaign. The economic argument also would anticipate a large surge of Klan violence during or immediately following the deep 1981-1982 economic recession. Again, a Klan campaign did not occur. The downfall of David

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<sup>501</sup> Victor Zarnowitz and Geoffrey H. Moore, “The Recession and Recovery of 1973-1976,” in *Explorations in Economic Research*, ed. Victor Zarnowitz and Geoffrey H. Moore (NBER, October 1977).

<sup>502</sup> Karen R. Merrill, *The Oil Crisis of 1973-1974 : A Brief History with Documents*, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007).

<sup>503</sup> William Schneider, “The November 4 Vote for President: What Did It Mean?,” in *The American Elections of 1980*, ed. Austin Ranney (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1981).

<sup>504</sup> Alberto Alesina, Geoffrey Carliner, and ebrary Inc., “Politics and Economics in the Eighties,” In *A National Bureau of Economic Research project report*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), <http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio7610200>.

<sup>505</sup> Christopher Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America : From the Klan to Al Qaeda*, Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), 27.

Duke in 1981 combined with the prosecution of Louis Beam stunted any Klan growth in the first year of the decade. The 1982 revelation of Wilkinson's background as an FBI informant activity as the final nail in the coffin, all but destroying any chance of Klan revival. Because predicted surges in Klan terrorism throughout the 1970s and especially during the early 1980s failed to materialize, the economy as a source of structural problems leading to terrorist campaigns has to be judged weak to non-existent in this case.

Positing that an ideological opponent is necessary factor to sustain a Klan campaign also fails in this instance, as there were numerous enemies from which the Klan could have chosen to mobilize. This particular explanation loses credibility due to the fact that when a credible ideological opponent did appear to directly challenge the Klan, instead of enlarging and unifying, it was atomized, beaten, and bankrupted. Although the Klan tried to counter the SPLC, the SPLC beat it repeatedly in the courts. Nor was the SPLC alone. A loose affiliation of human rights organizations coalesced into the Anti-Klan Network. Beginning around 1979, the Anti-Klan Network travelled to active and potentially active Klan hot spots to expose the truth about the Klan's ideology and to provide communities the tools with which to counter Klan recruitment. Many of the Anti-Klan Network's leaders were rightfully described as possessing polar-opposite ideologies of the Klan, but the Klan never responded, much less develop a sustainable symbiotic relationship. Nonetheless, since there were multiple national ideological opponents to align against during the 1970–1980s, the presence of an ideological opponent will be coded as present.

Finally, for those advocating the return of war veterans as a factor in terrorist campaigns, the aftermath of Vietnam should have resulted in a burst of Klan terrorism. The fact there was a tremendous lull in Klan terrorism during this period calls this as a critical factor into doubt. Following the 1968 Tet Offensive, the United States adopted a "Vietnamization" policy which gradually handed off all responsibility to the South Vietnamese military. American soldiers began the redeployment process soon

thereafter.<sup>506</sup> In 1972, a pressured Nixon ordered the immediate drawdown of 70,000 troops from Vietnam, and the 1973 Paris Peace Accords officially ended American involvement in the conflict. The timing of the redeployment of war veteran along with the rise of the very charismatic David Duke, should have led to a sustained campaign of terrorism; if there were ever to be an example of “disillusioned” war veterans returning from an unpopular overseas conflict, it would be here. That this redeployment failed to initiate or sustain a campaign speaks to its limited usefulness as a factor in predicting or explaining right wing terrorism, at least in this case.

### C. SPONSORSHIP EXPLANATIONS

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1970–1980s, like the KKK of the 1950–1960s, enjoyed political support from neither the Republican nor the Democratic Party. Save perhaps Strom Thurmond and Robert Byrd—both of whom backed away from their open support of racist organizations—no politician could afford to admit association with the Ku Klux Klan. Although Imperial Wizard Wilkinson threw his support behind Reagan’s 1980 Presidential campaign—once stating “the Republican platform reads as if it were written by a Klansman”—Reagan quickly condemned the endorsement and even tried to associate Jimmy Carter with the hooded order.<sup>507</sup> In his opening campaign speech, Reagan mocked the Carter campaign, proclaiming to the audience that, while he (Reagan) was in All-American Detroit, Carter was “opening his campaign down in that city that gave birth to and is the parent body of the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>508</sup> Embarrassed, Reagan later apologized to the mayor of Tuscumbia, Alabama when it was pointed out that Tuscumbia was neither the birthplace nor the parent body of the Klan.

The Klan remained a political embarrassment for any political party associated with it. Any benefits a politician might gain from offering support or legitimacy to the Klan were far outweighed by the negative repercussions should that relationship become public knowledge. Other than a few instances when FBI agents appeared to be apathetic,

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<sup>506</sup> Lewis Sorley, *A Better War : The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999), Chapter 8: Drawdown.

<sup>507</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 387.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

there were no instances when the federal government offered rhetorical or material support. Without support from a state one could conclude that the Klan was unable to initiate a campaign of terrorism. This would be keeping in line with Claire Sterling's argument about third party support. The theory suggests that where there is no active support for the Klan, we should not expect to see a campaign. During this period, theory aligns with reality.

However, as was also true in every other period studied, the Klan was able to engage in terrorist acts wherever local law enforcement and judges allowed it the space in which to operate with impunity. While police and legal collaboration were not nearly as prevalent as they had been in previous years there were a few incidents.

One such example was in northern Alabama, where up until the late 1960s signs still greeted travelers with: "NIGGER DON'T LET THE SUN SET ON YOUR HEAD IN CULLMAN COUNTY ALABAMA."<sup>509</sup> Although these were removed by the 1970s, the sentiment behind them was still very much alive. Alabama governor George Wallace was most responsible for providing the Klan such safe havens from which to operate. His famous "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" speech—written by Klansman Asa Carter, who borrowed generously from the Klan motto for it—left no doubt about where Wallace stood with regard to race relations. As if his image needed further burnishing, in 1975 Wallace went so far as to officially name David Duke a colonel in the state militia. In Decatur, when Imperial Wizard Bill Wilkinson proclaimed that the Klan was now "providing vigilante law for Decatur," no one—least of all the police chief—refuted the statement.<sup>510</sup> The Klan would eventually lose this safe haven—as well as havens in Mississippi and Texas—once watchdog groups brought national attention to the problem. However, wherever police turned a blind eye, Klan terrorism flourished.

For the most part, law enforcement did turn against the Klan. As former SPLC paralegal Bill Stanton pointed out:

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<sup>509</sup> Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*, 42.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

By the late 1970s sympathy for the Klan seemed to be on the wane among white Southern lawmen, and it was rare to hear of a law enforcement officer who actually belonged to the Klan or some other organized white supremacist group. Stricter hiring standards and improved pay had resulted in the attraction of higher caliber recruits to Southern police forces...Furthermore, the integration of many police agencies made it more difficult for the KKK to operate inside them as it once had.<sup>511</sup>

More professional police forces began more effective enforcement efforts against white supremacist groups, thereby eliminating their safe havens.<sup>512</sup> Once a non government entity (the SPLC) proved willing to actively target the Klan and publicly humiliate law enforcement agencies who refused to carry out the law, many local police stations found themselves shamed into maintaining national laws. The same could be said of judges, as by the late 1970s, “the full weight of the Justice Department, which had too often been invisible during the civil rights years, now helped keep the Klan and its associates on the run.”<sup>513</sup>

Adding to the Klan’s problems was the 1980 standup of the SPLC’s Klanwatch program. Through this program, the nonprofit organization systematically disassembled the Klan throughout the south. In 1981, the SPLC shut down Louis Beam and the Texas Klan; in 1984, the Alabama Klan was dismantled; 1985 saw the downfall of the North Carolina chapter; and Robert Shelton’s UKA was brought down in 1987. After targeting the larger Klans, the SPLC cleaned up by attacking the IEKKKK in 1988, and then shifted its efforts to other racist groups such as Tom Metzger’s WAR (sued in 1990).

Arguable, more than during any other period, the Klan of the 1970–1980s was under constant pressure and forced to operate under the threat of unrelenting legal pressure. Safe havens, where and when they existed briefly enabled Klan terrorism. But whenever identified, these havens were quickly challenged by watchdog organizations as well as anti-Klan protest groups. Whenever directly challenged, Klan terrorism retreated.

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>512</sup> In a personal interview, Joe Roy of the SPLC stressed the importance of educating and professionalizing all branches of law enforcement.

<sup>513</sup> Stephen Scheinberg, “Right Wing Extremism in the United States,” in *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk*, ed. Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 59.

Therefore, the presence or absence of safe havens did play a significant role in helping to explain the sporadic nature of Klan activity during the 1970s and 1980s.

#### **D. ORGANIZATIONAL EXPLANATIONS**

When it comes to explaining the lack of terrorist activity by the Klan during the late 1970s and 1980s, one has to consider the inability to merge autonomous units in a single unified front combined with a complete misunderstanding of which recruitment strategies could best attract new members to be major factors.

It is difficult to analyze the organizational design of the 1970–1980s Klan simply because the term “organization” so ineffectually captures what the Klan was. Any actual hierarchy was quickly undercut through defections and internal dissent. The 1974 rise of David Duke and subsequent unification under him was as close as the Klan came to achieving hierarchical organization. But rather quickly, beginning with Bill Wilkinson’s defection in 1975, Duke’s organization fell into disarray. Three major strands of Klandom emerged, one led by Duke, one led by Wilkinson, and the last led by Shelton. Smaller satellite organizations revolved around each one of these three strands.

By 1979, the three Klans fought amongst themselves more often than they fought with anyone or anything else. Shelton, still leader of the UKA, resented Duke and suspected him of leaking a story to a gay tabloid that accused the UKA Wizard of changing his sexual orientation while behind bars.<sup>514</sup> Wilkinson, in turn, lambasted Duke for being all talk and no action. Duke publicly taunted Wilkinson as a violent half-wit, once commenting that his former lieutenant was “practically an illiterate who has never read anything.”<sup>515</sup> Rank and file Klansmen were left scratching their heads looking for a point of unity.

In the early 1980s, the Klan’s organizational problems only intensified. A publicly humiliated Duke lost control of his Klan, while his successor was immediately jailed for his hare-brained Dominica coup attempt. Other Klan leaders—like Tom

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<sup>514</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 370.

<sup>515</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 26.



Metzger—walked away from the Klan to form their own organizations. The highly disorganized, yet highly militant neo-Nazi movement pulled still others away from the Klan and into its ideological tent. The remnants of the Klan were further dismantled through court proceedings, and leaders were soon made aware of the financial costs associated with running a recognizably hierarchical organization. Local Klans quickly renounced their memberships in any parent organization; subsequently, the Klan—as an entity—atomized and dwindled. Unlike during previous periods, “the white supremacist movement had expanded in so many directions that it no longer made sense to talk about the Ku Klux alone.”<sup>516</sup>

Leadership issues help to explain why the Klan proved unable to generate a campaign. The 1970–1980s, were rife with internal squabbling, while the leader who emerged strongest was actually an FBI informant. While David Duke possessed the charisma and tools needed to re-popularize the Klan, he fell victim to his own cult of personality as he went on public speaking tours around the United States. Willing to tamp down the Klan’s racist rhetoric publicly, he was known to rant in private meetings that “there’s times I’ve felt like picking up a gun and shooting a nigger...we’re going to do everything to protect our race.”<sup>517</sup> Eventually, Duke became more interested in a political career than in leading the Klan, and, due to pressures from Bill Wilkinson, turned over control in order to found the National Association for the Advancement of White People. It was Wilkinson, a former submariner aboard the USS *Simon Bolivar*, who took over Klan leadership in 1980, but was immediately exposed as an informant for the FBI and bankrupted by the SPLC shortly thereafter. Robert Shelton, leader of the third strand of Klandom, kept his head down and largely stayed quiet after being investigated by the FBI in the 1960s, an experience which landed him time behind bars. Although, Shelton maintained control over as many as 5,000 Klansmen in 1983, by 1987 he had been destroyed by SPLC lawsuits.

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<sup>516</sup> Klanwatch Project, “Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence,” 40.

<sup>517</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 65.

Regarding effective recruitment pitches, the Klan simply bet on the wrong horse. In an attempt to outdo rival Klan groups, leaders failed to look beyond their Klan rivals to see their racist recruitment pitch no longer resonated. Other white supremacist organizations realized the Klan's mistake and altered their rhetoric to play on a growing anti-government sentiment throughout the United States. As Morris Dees himself points out, "[the Klan's] strident racist and anti-Semitic rhetoric kept Beam and the others at the fringe of the debate."<sup>518</sup> Groups that were more successful at the time—often led by former Klansmen—focused their anti-government pitch on excessive taxation and fears of a government crackdown on personal weapons. It is as if the Klan pinned its hopes on the appeal of *The Clansman* while other groups invoked *The Turner Diaries*.

Further complicating the Klan's recruitment efforts were the limited means at its disposal for disseminating its propaganda. Unlike during previous eras, "the religious right wanted nothing to do with the Klan and steadfastly denied it the support fundamentalists had lent it in the 1920s."<sup>519</sup> Although the "Moral Majority"—a highly religious and influential band of preachers and politicians—began to attain political power by the late 1970s, this movement turned against the Klan and openly attacked the organization for immorally manipulating the Christian faith. The Klan, financially strapped and with no media support, was relegated to sending news through cheap publications and via limited distribution channels.

## E. CONCLUSIONS

As during the previous periods studied, structural factors carry the least amount of explanatory value for understanding or explaining Klan violence during the 1970–1980s. Although the United States experienced significant economic troubles, the Klan was only able to make minor strides through sporadic, unsustainable acts of terrorism. The existence of left wing opponents only spiked Klan terrorism when these opponents chose to attack the Klan directly—"Death to the Klan" marches being a prime example. When left wing opponents avoided direct confrontation with the Klan, and chose to work either

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<sup>518</sup> Dees and Corcoran, *Gathering Storm : America's Militia Threat*, 3-4.

<sup>519</sup> Wade, *The Fiery Cross : The Ku Klux Klan in America*, 383.

through the courts or by educating communities instead, the Klan shrank. Finally, the period did not see a Klan campaign on spite of the significant drawdown from the Vietnam War and the resultant influx of veterans, should have spurred a Klan campaign.

Arguments about sponsorship approach do a better, although not perfect, job of helping to explain the absence of a sustained Klan campaign during the 1970–1980s. What I call the “Sterling Ideal”—the argument that terrorist organizations rely on active support from third party actors—can’t be validated or invalidated by the Klan’s relative impotence during this period since a negative can’t prove a negative. Worth noting is that there were few, if any, safe havens in which the Klan could operate; watchdog organizations and a professionalized police force saw to that. As would be expected in the absence of such sanctuaries, the Klan was unable to sustain an actual terrorist campaign.

Finally, arguments about the significance of organizational factors provide the greatest insight into the causes of the Klan’s failures during the period. First, the Klan’s fractured, competing, and decentralized organizational structure prevented it from developing any coherent strategy, much less stringing together acts of terrorism toward some strategic end. The leadership squabbles between Duke, Wilkinson, and Shelton made the Klan a laughingstock on the revolutionary right, a condition further exacerbated when Wilkinson’s affiliations with the FBI became public knowledge. Finally, the Klan of the 1970–1980s lacked the ability to craft a recruitment message which resonated with the dominant social concerns of the day.

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## **CHAPTER VII. RESULTS—A COMPARISON OF KU KLUX TERRORISM**

As analysis in the preceding four chapters suggests, no single approach adequately explains campaigns of Klan terrorism. In this dissertation, four different periods of Klan violence have been examined in order to compare the three main approaches commonly used to explain terrorist campaigns: structural, sponsorship, and organizational. The aim has been to use three waves of Klan terrorism (which this dissertation also recognizes as campaigns) to determine whether explanations for right wing terrorism commonly used in terrorism studies adequately predict or explain the emergence of sustained terrorism in a North American case. Eight different factors have been considered; economic recessions, the mass return of veterans, the presence of an ideological opponent, the presence of a third party sponsor, the presence of safe havens, and the structure, leadership, and recruitment techniques of an organization. Many of the factors tested were present in a few but not all periods. The factors were also tested against a negative case (the 1970/80s). Using Mills Method of Agreement and Difference, these variations should raise a red flag and hint at factor necessity as we try to improve our logical understanding of the phenomenon. The presence and/or absence of these factors across cases indicate one of two possibilities. First, by comparing the positive cases using Mill's Method of Agreement, we can assess which factors are necessary and which are not. If absent in one or more positive cases, a factor can be dismissed as spurious and unnecessary. If present in each positive case, a factor should be recognized as a potentially necessary one. Second, using Mill's Method of Difference, we compare the negative case (the "non-campaign" focused on a time period in which the Klan could only muster sporadic acts of terrorism, despite conditions that, theoretically, should have supported a sustained campaign) with the positive cases. This second comparison permits us to search for sufficient factors. If present in the negative case, a factor or combination of factors is not sufficient to cause the outcome. If present in only positive cases, a factor or combination of factors is sufficient to cause the outcome.

This chapter concludes that—broadly speaking—the organizational approach fares best in explaining Klan campaigns, followed by the sponsorship approach, and, finally, the structural approach. This thesis asserts that although some theoretical approaches are better than others, none are adequate for either academic or policy purposes when used in isolation. This is hardly front page news, as gadflies have been arguing as much for years. None of them, however, have offered a better tool in response. Given the fact no single approach proves adequate, the only solution is to sacrifice parsimony and elegance for explanatory value. This said, we must begin to look for points of synthesis. Through cross-study comparative analysis, it became apparent that an interplay between two of the approaches existed, suggesting an explanation yet to be fully explored in the realm of terrorism studies.

The argument presented here is that terrorist campaigns result from the relationship between the organizational fit of a terrorist group to the presence or absence of a safe haven combined with the organization's ability to frame a recruitment message which hides its underlying ideology yet ties into a preexisting dominant societal narrative. The proper "fit" relies on the decision making skills of the group's leaders. The concept of organizational "fit" builds on contingency theory, which grants primacy to a terrorist organization adapting its structure depending on the presence or absence of safe haven. The remainder of this chapter offers supporting analysis.

## **A. RESULTS OF ANALYSIS**

For purposes of clarification, each approach to terrorism tested offers, in essence, a "family" of variables. Within these broadly-defined "families" reside factors commonly used to support the line of thought advanced by the approach. For each period studied, both the approaches and the factors were tested to determine their presence or absence. Following these tests, it is appropriate to first analyze the results broadly—at the "family" level—and then delve deeper into individual factors. Table 1 summarizes the results at the broadest level.

	<b>Structural Approach</b> (economic recessions, ideological enemies, return of veterans)	<b>Sponsorship Approach</b> (active support from third party sponsors, presence of safe havens)	<b>Organizational Approach</b> (organizational structure, leadership, recruitment techniques)
<b>1860s Klan</b>	Strongly Supported	Strongly Supported	Strongly Supported
<b>1920s Klan</b>	Moderately Supported	Moderately Supported	Strongly Supported
<b>1960s Klan</b>	Moderately Supported	Moderately Supported	Strongly Supported
<b>1980s Klan</b>	Weakly Supported	Strongly Supported	Strongly Supported

Table 2. Findings from Broad Analysis

Comparing the periods, two of the explanatory approaches revealed consistent moderate to strong explanatory value (moderate defined as at least half the variables tested were present). The strongest of these, the organizational approach, was robustly supported in each time period studied. In fact, there are several instances when we observed concomitant variation between campaign intensity and changes in terrorist organizational structure. The sponsorship approach proved robust in two of the four periods, and was moderately supported by the remaining two. Finally, the structural approach, which proved weakest, received strong support in only one campaign, moderate support in two, and weak support in the final instance. Of the three factors tested under the structural approach, the return of war veterans as a “root” cause of Klan terrorism appears the closest to achieving necessity, but was undercut by the results of the final two periods. The other variables—economic collapse and presence of an ideological enemy—were easier to dismiss. Broad analysis—simply viewing each approach as a whole—could not eliminate any factors outright, but did serve to highlight the stronger and weaker factors.

	<b>Structural Approach</b>	<b>Sponsorship</b>	<b>Organizational Approach</b>
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				Approach				
	Economic Recession	Ideological Opponent	Return of Veterans	Direct support from 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	Safe Haven (Legal, Judicial)	Structure	Leadership	Recruitment Techniques
<b>1860s Klan:</b> Strong Campaign, Constrained to South	Yes	Yes (Union Leagues)	Yes (Civil War)	Yes (Democratic Party)	Yes (Majority of South)	Hierarchy	Unified, Strong	Good Framing (Defense of South, Patriotic, Racist)
<b>1920s Klan:</b> Strong National Campaign	Yes (1920-21)	No	Yes (WWI)	No	Yes (National)	Hierarchy	Unified, Strong	Good Framing (100% Americanism, Patriotic, Racist)
<b>1950/60s Klan:</b> Moderate Campaign, Constrained to South	No	Yes (SCLC)	No	No	Yes (Pockets in South)	Fractured, but Hierarchical	Competing, Lackluster	Poor to Moderate Framing (School Segregation, Racist)
<b>1970/80s Klan:</b> No Campaign, "Lone Wolf"	Yes (1970s stagflation)	Yes (SPLC, ADL)	Yes (Vietnam)	No	No	Atomized	Competing, Lacking	Poor Framing (No single narrative, Racist)
<b>Causal Power of Variables</b>	Not Necessary or Sufficient	Not Necessary or Sufficient	Not Necessary or Sufficient	Not Necessary or Sufficient	Necessary but not Sufficient	Necessary but not Sufficient	Necessary but not Sufficient	Necessary but not Sufficient
Jointly sufficient								

Table 3. Findings of Systematic Review

## 1. Structural Factors Systematically Reviewed

Looking first at the argument that economic recessions are a necessary factor in the emergence of Klan campaigns, we find only two instances when the explanation can be supported; during the 1860s and during the 1920s. As Chapter III indicates, the Reconstruction Era was a time of economic devastation for the South. For the duration of the Klan campaign (1867–1871), the South suffered economic hardship, a hardship that preceded the Klan campaign. The utility of economic collapse as a predictor of terrorist campaigns also finds support in the 1920s. Although the 1920s was a time of economic prosperity, between January 1920 and June 1921, the United States fell into a deep economic recession. Unemployment climbed from 5.2% in 1919 to 11.7% in 1921, a crisis some attribute to the massive influx of veterans rejoining civil society.<sup>520</sup> The

<sup>520</sup> Vernon, "The 1920-21 Deflation: The Role of Aggregate Supply."



Klan, awakened in 1915, underwent dramatic growth in the summer of 1920, but the chronology suggests this growth is more likely attributed to the June 1920 hiring of a propaganda business. Nonetheless, an economic recession was present during the time examined and has to be coded in that way. The 1950s and 1960s were, quite simply, times of economic prosperity. As such, citing economic recession fails to predict or explain the campaign of Klan violence during this period. A decade of stagflation under the Carter administration in the 1970s should have led to a terrorist campaign. Yet, a Klan campaign failed to emerge. Through cross-study comparisons, significant economic recessions—present in only two of four studies—is deemed not necessary for the emergence of a Klan campaign.

Seeking to bolster the findings from inter-case analysis, economic factors can be subjected to intra-case analysis. For instance, following the Civil War, the North was undeniably more prosperous than the South. However, if we look at actual poverty levels, for many Northerners, the emerging post war society proved financially disastrous. Historian Eric Foner highlights this economic disparity, stating “the unprecedented fortunes accumulated by the nation’s captains of commerce and industry helped create one of the highest levels of income inequality in all American history.”<sup>521</sup> In essence, poverty ravaged sections of the North, but was hidden by the overwhelming fortunes accumulated by businessmen when national average incomes were reported. However, the global economic recession from 1873-1879 did fail to produce a right wing campaign of significance in the North, despite the presence of abject poverty and slums in many major cities. According to economic explanations for terrorism, the Ku Klux Klan should have found fertile recruiting ground among Northern slums. History shows they did not; nor did any other right wing terrorist group. In fact, the opposite occurred, as unions mobilized the poor to champion left wing causes. In sum, although poverty was rampant, campaigns of right wing terrorism were not.

The final nail in the coffin for the significance of the economy as a factor is the fact that the Klan went on life support following the Great Depression of the 1930s. Economic explanations would predict a surge of coordinated Klan violence, but Klan

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<sup>521</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 477.

campaigns failed to materialize. In fact, since 1866, there have been at least 30 instances of economic recessions (of varying magnitudes) in the United States, at least one per decade, and none of these generated a sustained Klan campaign.<sup>522</sup> The relative inactivity of the Klan in the wake of the multiple economic crises calls the significance of economic recession as a catalyst into question. Without a more detailed understanding of the social and psychological effects of economic crisis within varying specific environmental contexts, economic crisis as a determinative factor proves too imprecise. For these reasons, using economic crises, broadly defined, as a predictor to Klan terrorism campaigns is judged unnecessary.

The second factor, the presence of an ideological opposite (in this case a left wing opponent) also fares poorly as the studies are compared. Proponents of this explanation can point to the presence of the Union Leagues during Reconstruction and Martin Luther King's SCLC during the Civil Rights Era. The 1920s Klan advertised itself as anti-Communist, pro-Prohibition, and pro-American at a time when there was no real Communist, anti-Prohibition, or anti-American organization worth mentioning. Although the NAACP took issue with the Klan's racism, by this time the Klan had buried its racist ideology under a pitch of 100% Americanism, thus sidestepping a direct confrontation, and going so far as to publicly label the NAACP communist rather than opposing it on racial grounds. Finally, the 1970–1980s Klan confronted an ideological opposite in the form of the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Instead of developing a symbiotic campaign of opposition<sup>523</sup>, the Klan allowed itself to be destroyed through prosecution and lawsuits. In other words, for the Klan of the 1970–1980s an ideological opposite spelled defeat rather than a springboard toward

embarking upon a sustainable campaign of terrorism. Failing in two of the four cases, the presence of a left wing opponent is also deemed an unnecessary factor for the emergence of Klan campaigns.

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<sup>522</sup> Victor Zarnowitz, *Business Cycles : Theory, History, Indicators, and Forecasting*, A National Bureau of Economic Research Monograph (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>523</sup> The logic behind “symbiotic relationships” leading to campaigns of terrorism is discussed in Chapter II.

The presence of left wing opponents as an indicator of right wing campaigns also falls short when we conduct expanded analysis through intra-case study. The Reconstruction Era once again provides such an opportunity. If one sought had out “left wing organizations” to take up arms against, the North was home to most of them. Radical Republicanism was conceived in the North, and was a political ideology formed by a group of men who criticized even the fairly liberal ideas of President Lincoln for being too conservative. Unions—a left wing concept—were also prominent throughout the post-war North. Again, campaigns of terrorism designed to oppose them were largely absent as the job of handling union riots fell to law enforcement and military personnel—groups that, admittedly, took to the task with zeal. The fact that the North was dominated by left wing activism and no right wing terrorist campaign developed to counter it to tends to undercut the idea that symbiotic relationships of terrorist activity are built from ideologically opposing enemies.

With regards to an ideological opponent, what seems far more important than an actual organization that the Klan painted itself in contradiction with was the Klan’s ability to create an ideological opponent where one may not have existed. The clearest example of this in the case of the Klan is the continual reliance upon fears of “white womanhood” being taken by lustful African Americans. The fear—an unfounded one—lives on today, as witnessed in the White Nationalist “14 Word” rally cry “because the beauty of the White Aryan woman must not perish from the earth.”<sup>524</sup> Protection of white womanhood’s sanctity is a powerful theme that has existed since the creation of the Klan in 1866. The Klan’s ability to paint Jews as an existential threat has existed since the 1920s, a powerful too carried on today through the belief that a Zionist Occupational Government is taking over the United States. The fact that evidence of a mass rape of white women at the hands of black men or shred of proof that Jewish conspiracy actually

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<sup>524</sup> David Lane, “Open Letter to a Dead Race,”(2005), [http://www.resist.com/Open\\_Letter\\_to\\_a\\_Dead\\_Race.pdf](http://www.resist.com/Open_Letter_to_a_Dead_Race.pdf). Accessed 22 August 2011. Alternatively, the 14 word motto is also expressed as “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children.”

exist is of minor concern. What matters is the ability to paint both as ideological opponents, thus crafting a perceived threat out of the darkest corners of society's collective minds.

The final structural factor tested was the mass return of war veterans. Beginning with the Reconstruction era study, it is difficult to argue that the return of veterans did not play a role in the resulting Klan campaign. Klan ranks were built according to a military hierarchy and top leadership positions were filled by skilled Confederate generals. Here, the ties between the Klan and military vets are too strong to dismiss. During the 1920s the return of veterans was also a factor in Klan campaigns since soldiers were returning in droves with battlefield experiences from World War I. A surge of doughboys had returned stateside by the end of 1919 and the subsequent massive demobilization dropped the overall military strength from wartime highs of around 4,000,000 to fewer than 150,000.<sup>525</sup> Although many military members joined the Klan upon their return, Klan leadership ranks were filled primarily by non-WWI veterans. Because we must acknowledge the fact that a surge of vets did occur, we must code the factor as present. In contrast, 1950–1960s campaign was undertaken without a great influx of veterans. Further calling into question veterans as a critical factor is the fact that American soldiers were returning from the Vietnam War during the early 1970s, yet no Klan campaign erupted as a result. Indeed, the war appears to have a greater impact on the rise of leftist terrorism during and after the veteran's return.<sup>526</sup> Providing explanatory support on even a generous interpretation in only two of the four studies, the presence of war veterans is declared unnecessary.

Labeling the return of veterans to be an unnecessary factor gains additional support through intra-study analysis of the Reconstruction era Klan. We must remember that the North also suddenly experienced a return of veterans. Subsequently, the North experienced a surge of left wing activism, as labor unions began fighting for workers' rights, standardized wages, shorter work days, and an expansion of educational

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<sup>525</sup> David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939 : Decades of Promise and Pain*, The Greenwood Press "Daily Life through History" Series, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>526</sup> Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America : From the Klan to Al Qaeda*, 32-33.

opportunities.<sup>527</sup> Instead of joining terrorist organizations which urged collective violence, Northern vets joined organizations preaching collective politics. Whereas the South leaned right after the war, the North leaned left. It is no coincidence that while Klan violence plagued the South, the North experienced “the rise of liberalism.”<sup>528</sup> Again, this is not painting the North as a violence-free utopia. When liberal collective politics failed, a string of left wing violence plagued the North. Groups like the Molly Maguires, the Knights of Labor, and multiple anarchist organizations staged violent union strikes and bombings in the name of egalitarianism. This underscores how inaccurate it is to argue that an influx of veterans translates into right wing terrorism.

Again, although the return of veterans is dismissed as a necessary factor, the Ku Klux Klan has benefitted from the skills brought to it from military members—a point most poignantly made through the study of the Reconstruction era Klan. During the 1920s, sailors were photographed debarking from an aircraft carrier and putting on their Klan robes for a mass photo.<sup>529</sup> During the 1980s, former Special Forces soldier Glenn Miller trained his North Carolina Klan right outside the gates of Fort Bragg, prompting gate guards to call in the training as a routine military exercise.<sup>530</sup> Although the mass return of veterans does not equate directly to the initiation of a right wing terrorist campaign, when an organization is able to attract soldiers, the likelihood of a campaign is definitely enhanced by the skills a trained soldier brings to a militant organization. Given the correct set of circumstances, welcoming trained military veterans into an organization can be a significant enhancer of terrorism.

In conclusion, systematic review suggests the structural factors tested in this thesis are *neither necessary nor sufficient* to explain or predict campaigns of Klan terrorism. Essentially, the use of structural explanations to predict and explain right wing

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<sup>527</sup> This said, unions still overwhelmingly barred black men and all women from their ranks. The gains being sought by the unions would be enjoyed primarily by white workers. Chinese immigrants were often targeted by these unions. From the author’s perspective, the unionization of the North is demonstration of a leftward shift.

<sup>528</sup> Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, 488.

<sup>529</sup> James Gregory, “The Washington State Klan in the 1920s : Photographs,”(2010), [http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/kkk\\_photos.php](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/kkk_photos.php). Accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>530</sup> Joe Roy, Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011.

terrorism has to be considered a hit-or-miss affair. This dissertation supports Dipak Gupta's argument that "there can be wide ranging social, political, economic, and even religious grievances in the society, but, following the predictions of Olson's Paradox<sup>531</sup>, these will not necessarily lead to violence." Instead, "violence takes place when a leader gives voice to the frustration by formulating a well-defined social construction of collective identity."<sup>532</sup> This dissertation thereby adds to a growing literature which argues structural explanations provide a comparatively weaker overall explanation of what enables, triggers, or sustains terrorist campaigns.<sup>533</sup> Reliance on structural factors—especially economic ones—may prove useful on occasion, but the deeper one digs in analysis the more holes one finds. Due to its overall inability to explain Klan campaigns, the structural approach, and the factors tested within it, are thus to be dismissed as neither necessary nor sufficient explanations.

This is not to say that structural factors have no importance in the emergence of Klan campaigns, it just means they just do not provide as much of a "push" as many would have us believe. Structural factors provide a terrorist organization an array of potential issues to build perceived threats and conspiracies from. Some form of structural strain is present during every era of American existence. Structural factors are important, therefore, only when a terrorist organization can make them important. Alexis de Tocqueville once proclaimed that "the evils which were endured with patience so long as they were inevitable seem intolerable as soon as hope can be entertained about escaping from them."<sup>534</sup> What a successful terrorist organization (like the Klan) must be able to do is turn a "tolerable evil" into an intolerable existential threat in order to mobilize

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<sup>531</sup> Olson's Paradox deals with the problems individuals have trying to organize to take collective action. The more individuals, or in this case, variables that are introduced to spur collective action, the harder it is to actually undertake it.

<sup>532</sup> Dipak Gupta, "Exploring Roots of Terrorism," in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality, and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjorgo (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 19.

<sup>533</sup> Krueger and Maleckova, "Education, Poverty, Political Violence, and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?," Jitka Maleckova, "Impoverished Terrorists: Stereotype or Reality?," in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality, and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjorgo (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005). Crenshaw, *Terrorism in Context*. Gregory Hess S. Brock Blomberg, Akila Weerapana, "Economic Conditions and Terrorism," *European Journal of Political Economy* 20(April 2004).

<sup>534</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville and Henry Reeve, *On the State of Society in France before the Revolution of 1789* (London: J. Murray, 1856), 152-53.

support against it. The more structural strains present for a terrorist organization to choose from, the greater the likelihood they will get it correct, and the greater the leeway the organization has in adopting a broad recruitment pitch that can encompass many of the issues at once (even if they are in contradiction to one another.) A longitudinal study of the Klan suggests that far more important than structural factors is the organization's ability to realize them and to ensure it addresses the concern in a way that has mass appeal. Though structural factors may prove neither necessary nor sufficient, they can definitely aid a terrorist group by expanding the list of grievances and societal fears that the group can base a recruitment strategy from.

## **2. Sponsorship Factors Systematically Reviewed**

The first of the tests conducted on the sponsorship approach was to determine whether a third party sponsor—in the form of a political party or foreign third party sponsor—was necessary to initiate and sustain a campaign of Klan terrorism. Of all tests conducted, this particular explanation fared the worst. In only one case—that of the Reconstruction Era—did the Klan expressly serve the interests of a political party to the point it could be considered a militant wing. During the 1920s, it appears roles were reversed, to a degree that the Klan wielded so much power that politicians began to serve its interests. During the 1950–1960s, politicians largely rejected association with the Klan, offered no support, and actively campaigned to fight its activities and ideology. In the 1970–1980s the Klan did not have active support from a party or third party sponsor and, according to the predictions of the theory, did not initiate a campaign. Scoring support in only two of the four studies, we could say the need for a third party sponsor was proved unnecessary for the emergence or sustainment of a Klan terrorist campaign.

Although active support from a third party is deemed unnecessary, similar to many of the structural factors, the interactions between the Klan and political parties dramatically enhanced any campaign of terrorism where a relationship was forged. During the Reconstruction era, the tight relationship formed between the Democratic Party and Klan Imperial officers (who represented the party in numerous conventions and committees) helped strategically focus Klan violence to achieve political effects.

Considering that the Democratic Party had regained power in the South by the early 1870s (and sooner), the relationship seemed to be beneficial to both. During the 1920s, after the Klan possessed the size to influence votes, the relationships built with politicians prevented anti-mask laws from being implemented, provided a degree of legitimacy to the Klan, allowing it to spread and sustain operations throughout the country. These associations were absent during the final two periods studied, partly because the Klan no longer possessed the strength to impact electoral outcomes, and partly because of the sullied reputation of the organization. Far from being the active support tested for in this dissertation, a co-dependency between the Klan and national parties was noted as an enhancing factor of the campaigns.

The second of the variables in the sponsorship approach—the presence of geographical, legal, or judicial safe havens—yields the first necessary factor of our comparisons. The presence of a safe haven was noted during the first three periods examined. In the 1970–1980s when the Klan was unable to trigger a campaign, it was constantly under pressure and lacked both active and tacit support. The intensity of campaigns also dovetailed with the presence or absence of sanctuaries. The number and overall geographic size of safe havens directly impacted both the geographic spread of Klaverns and the duration of their terrorist campaigns. The more significant the safe haven provided, the more powerful and more sustained Klan campaigns became. In three of the periods, the Klan actively increased the scale of its available safe havens by recruiting law enforcement personnel into its ranks. During the 1920s, the Klan was able to court Supreme Court justices and, according to more than a few narratives, even won the sympathy of the President of the United States (if not his actual membership). The presence of a safe haven can thus be considered a proximate factor upon which a terrorist campaign depends.

In summary, the argument that a terrorist organization requires the active support of some third party actor proves *neither necessary nor sufficient*. However, tacit forms of support, such as law enforcement turning a blind did lead to safe havens from which the Klan was able to operate. Present in each of the campaigns studied and absent in the



outlier case, the presence of safe havens is determined to be *necessary*. However, based on a close-up analysis of the cases, this factor was *not individually sufficient*.

### 3. Organizational Factors Systematically Reviewed

The first of the organizational factors tested, organizational structure, revealed a great deal about the emergence and sustainability of Klan campaigns. The Klan was both unified and hierarchical when waging its most powerful campaigns. Although debates rage over the span of operational control Forrest, Simmons, and Evans actually possessed, the degree to which Klans were able to coordinate across Realms (cross-state operations) reflects a higher degree of operational control than usually afforded them.<sup>535</sup> In what I consider to be a moderately strong campaign—the 1950–1960s—the Klan was initially fractured, but began to unify under Shelton and the UKA. This was concomitant with an increase in campaign activity. During the 1970–1980s, a completely atomized and internally fractured Klan could not generate a campaign of any significance. Rather than offering visions for the beginning of some grand new campaign, Louis Beam advocated that the Klan operate on the basis of Leaderless Resistance in the early 1980s. Fighting for survival in the face of an aggressive opponent, Beam realized a cellular organization was far more resistant to law enforcement efforts than a hierarchical organization would be. In each period studied, the presence of a hierarchical organization proved a necessary factor.

The second organizational factor considered also has to be considered necessary. The charisma and managerial effectiveness—i.e., leadership—of Klan leaders had a profound impact upon the overall effectiveness of the organization during each period studied. In two instances, the failure of leadership led to the downfall of the Klan; in

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<sup>535</sup> For examples of those who view the Klan as non-centralized, see: Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*; Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. For interpretations of the Klan as a coordinated organization see: John C. Lester, D. L. Wilson, and Walter Lynwood Fleming, *Ku Klux Klan, Its Origin, Growth and Disbandment* (New York and Washington,: The Neale publishing company, 1905); *The Nation's Peril. Twelve Years' Experience in the South. Then and Now. The Ku Klux Klan, a Complete Exposition of the Order: Its Purpose, Plans, Operations, Social and Political Significance; the Nation's Salvation*; Bullard, Southern Poverty Law Center., and Klanwatch Project., *The Ku Klux Klan : A History of Racism and Violence*; Eyre Damer, *When the Ku Klux Rode* (New York,: The Neale publishing company, 1912); Laura Martin Rose, *The Ku Klux Klan or Invisible Empire* (New Orleans, La.,: L. Graham co., ltd., 1914).

another it prevented a campaign from emerging. In the instances of downfall, the Imperial Wizard failed to recognize that support from law enforcement and local judges had dried up. Motivated by power and greed, leaders in both the 1920s and 1950–1960s failed to decentralize in order to survive. During the 1970s, an overall absence of leadership prevented any possibility of campaign emergence. When a charismatic candidate did emerge in the form of David Duke, he was publicly trashed by opposing Klan leaders.

Klan leaders who were motivated by ideology—Forrest for example—proved more successful than those motivated by wealth or power. Unfortunately for the Klan, more of its leaders largely were attracted by the latter. A leader's ability to recognize his operational environment and alter the organization to fit within it remains the most critical aspect of leadership, an aspect that will be flushed out in greater detail in the following chapter. Charisma turns out to have been most important as a leadership factor immediately before and during the initial phase of each campaign. Management skills appeared to be a more important factor following the opening months of a campaign.

Finally, recruitment techniques also proved necessary to sustain a campaign of terrorism. Where racism remained prevalent, the Klan's core message—fear of blacks—worked well as a recruitment pitch. What is more remarkable is that, where racism became less socially acceptable, successful Klans were able to bury their racist messages under more socially palatable and accepted themes. The centrality of crafting a resonant message was powerfully demonstrated during the 1920s when publicity experts had a major impact on the success of that era's Klan. The inability of the 1970–1980s Klan to craft such a message all but ensured its failure. Clinging to an openly racist message—during a period when other right wing groups enjoyed immense success by adopting an anti-government, anti-tax message—proved to be the Achilles heel for modern Klans. Second, the ability to propagate the message also proved critical. During the Reconstruction period, the Klan was able to transmit messages and coordinate activity through the use of Democratic newspapers. The 1920s Klan took matters into its own hands and developed an external newsletter (sold at newsstands) and an internal one (sent to each den) to maintain both external expansion and internal cohesion. In contrast, the

ability to control the message proved beyond the 1950–1960s and 1970–1980s KKK. Neither had the resources to generate quality newsletters. Nor did they enjoy sympathy from media outlets that might have propagated their message for free. Instead, the Klan relied on various leaflets and shoddy internal newsletters (which often attacked other Klan leaders) and phone networks (which automatically limited leaders’ span of message control).

In summary, all organizational factors tested within this dissertation proved *necessary and jointly sufficient*. This finding builds on the argument that terrorist organizations possess agency, and that terrorist campaigns owe more to the “pull” factors associated with organizations rather than to macro-level “push” factors found within society at large.

## **B. CONCLUSION**

Following analysis of the tests conducted in each study, four variables—presence of safe havens, organizational structure, leadership, and recruitment techniques—proved necessary factors in explaining campaigns of Klan terrorism. Although necessary, there is scant evidence to suggest that any one of the factors is individually sufficient. The following chapter offers an argument which suggests two specific relationships between variables are required to make these individually necessary factors jointly sufficient.

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## CHAPTER VIII. THE ARGUMENT

Thus far, evidence points to a strong interplay between one factor from the sponsorship approach (the presence of a safe haven) and three factors from the organizational approach (organizational structure, leadership, and recruitment techniques). This chapter lays out the pathway—from initiation point to establishment of campaign—through which the Ku Klux Klan was able to string together acts of terrorism over multiple years in pursuit of organizational goals by combining these factors. The first kind of interplay involves the presence or absence of safe havens in relation to the organizational structure chosen by Klan leaders. The second kind of interplay focuses on the ability of the Klan to downplay its core ideology and effectively frame a recruitment message which resonates with a pre-existing dominant social narrative—a narrative usually based on mythologized history or an unfalsifiable belief system.

### A. TRIGGER POINTS FOR CAMPAIGNS OF TERRORISM

The road to a terrorist campaign does not begin without a cause. Or, informally speaking, it takes a spark to start a fire. In 1971, James Davies advanced the argument that “people who are insecure in the satisfaction of their physical, social-affectional, or dignity needs form the dry tinder of revolution.”<sup>536</sup> Christopher Hewitt advanced the idea, and concluded that terrorism is a product of “those who can see little chance of getting what they want through normal political channels.”<sup>537</sup> In other words, societal insecurity born of political isolation (or marginalization) serves as the spark for terrorism. This dissertation’s findings support their argument, as political initiatives served, in one form or another, as the initiation points for all three Klan campaigns studied.

If we understand Klan campaigns as wildfires, it is not necessarily the spark which determines the eventual scope of destruction, but the spark was nonetheless necessary to start the fire. Each campaign described in this dissertation began with a

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<sup>536</sup> James Chowning Davies, *When Men Revolt and Why; a Reader in Political Violence and Revolution* (New York,: Free Press, 1970), 7-9.

<sup>537</sup> Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America : From the Klan to Al Qaeda*, 50.

spark, but the duration and intensity of what followed were products of other factors (discussed in the following sections). Although each period studied which had its own unique social, political, and economic context, they all shared one common factor: a distinct political cause which triggered the Klan's terrorist campaign. In each instance, there was a distinct threat of disruption to the societal status quo through either political initiatives or emerging social movements (which themselves threatened political disruption). Violence flared in each campaign in the wake of Congressional action.

The trigger point for the 1860s campaign is fairly obvious. The 1867 passage of the First and Second Reconstruction Acts by a Republican-dominated Congress lit the fuse for what would become the first, most violent campaign of Klan terrorism. The Reconstruction Acts effectively placed the South under military control and gave Congress final word on when a state could be readmitted into the national government. As chapter 3 discussed, the changes demanded by Radical Republicans were dramatic – and the Klan professed to be the tool needed to prevent these changes. History suggests the Klan was largely correct.

Understanding what triggered the 1920s Klan proves slightly more difficult, as multiple societal changes swept the country simultaneously. In contrast to what occurred in the 1860s, ideas in the 1920s were to be rallied around, not defended against. The most obvious were amendments prohibiting the sale or production of liquor and those granting women equal voting rights. The 18th and 19th Amendments were passed in October 1919 and August 1920, respectively, and both shook American society in dramatic ways. Through shrewd maneuvering, the Klan managed to capitalize on both. As Chapter 4 indicated, the most common tie between the Klans across the nation was their vigilante role as an under-the-table means to curb bootlegging. As anti-bootleggers, the Klan derived ardent support from women, to whom they professed themselves to be champions of suffrage—as long as women voted to maintain Prohibition, maintain proper moral standards, and continue in their role as subservient housewives. Female Klan auxiliary units were formed in the name of women's suffrage, only to later be used exclusively for Klan purposes which had little or nothing to do with women's rights. In

fact, the Klan eventually took up arms against women it deemed too progressive. Voting in line with Klan views was one thing; women acting in non-traditional manners was something entirely different.

Less studied, but perhaps more important for laying the groundwork for societal beliefs in the 1920s were wartime initiatives crafted to spur nationalism. The 1920s Klan benefitted from the Sedition Act of 1918, an act originally designed in 1917 to curb pro-German sentiments by compelling Americans to demonstrate their loyalty. The 1917 act was amended in 1918 to urge citizens to take up arms against communists, and was both cause and effect of the communist Red scare that swept the country. The Klan, “100% Americans” all, cast itself as anti-communist, and vowed to protect the country from overseas socialist programs, or any other threat to American life. Remarkably, by the mid-1920s, the Klan had managed to merge a pro-American, pro-Prohibition, pro-women’s suffrage, anti-women’s liberation, anti-communist, anti-black, anti-union, anti-rich, anti-Jew, and anti-Catholic message into a popular recruitment program.

The trigger for the 1950s Klan hearkened back to the original aims of Radical Reconstruction. Nearly one hundred years after slavery ended, on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court rendered a decision against segregation in public schools. The Klan took arms to prevent desegregation. For three years following the *Brown v Board of Education* decision, the Klan launched a bombing campaign, led primarily by Eldon Edwards’ U.S. Klans, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc. Activity decreased between 1958 and 1960, but picked up again within a year’s time, as the Civil Rights movement began to demand greater equality for Southern blacks. Klan bombings, lynchings, and murder became the theme of resistance. Ultimately, this Klan terrorism campaign would undermine its own stated objectives. Here, it is ironic that the violence used to prevent racial integration may have played a major role in the eventual realization of Civil Rights by bringing national attention to the issue of Klan terrorism. Says the head of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Section, “had it not been for the Klan killing

four little girls in the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church—a tragedy that drew national attention to the serious issue of Klan terrorism—we may still be living in a more segregated society.”<sup>538</sup>

The Klan of the 1970s/1980s was unable to cast itself either in opposition to or support of a political initiative. The Klan’s inability to weave its racist message into any prevailing social concern essentially spelled its demise. While other competing groups began to promote a unified anti-government theme, the Klan remained in its own ideological purgatory, unable to effectively craft a message to fit the social issues of the day, or to graft a broadly accepted history onto its operations. Whereas a keen ear regarding societal concerns and the ability to mobilize around political initiatives had once been the Klan’s strength, modern leaders proved themselves politically tone deaf.

Igniting a fire is one thing. Keeping it fed is a different matter. This chapter has thus far explained how Klan terrorist campaigns were triggered; the following section focuses on campaign growth and sustainment.

## **B. EXPLAINING CAMPAIGNS OF KLAN TERRORISM**

Given an almost 150-year existence, the Klan has managed to sustain terrorist campaigns for a little over fifteen percent of that time. Naturally, would say “redneck violence” is unacceptable by today’s societal standards and, therefore, nothing to worry about. The fact that there were over 750 racist hate groups in the United States in 2006 indicates the racist message is not quite as unacceptable as many would like to think.<sup>539</sup> In fact, had a Klan member not gotten cold feet and gone to the FBI, it is likely a 1997 plot to blow up a Texas natural gas refinery would have succeeded, potentially killing

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<sup>538</sup> Mark Potok, Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL, 25 May 2011.

<sup>539</sup> Wright, “Strategic Framing of Racial-Nationalism in North America and Europe: An Analysis of a Burgeoning Transnational Network,” Table 1.



between 10,000 to 30,000 people as a huge fireball first engulfed the community and a then released a cloud of lethal “sour gas.”<sup>540</sup> Domestic terrorism is not a threat we can discount as a relic of the past.

Thus for practical and not just theoretical reasons, it is critically important to understand how and when the Klan had the power to string together acts of terrorism into a sustainable campaign. This dissertation submits by taking into account organizational contingency theory as well as the Klan’s ability to effectively frame messages we can better understand Klan campaigns than by applying any other theory of terrorism commonly espoused today. According to contingency theory, “the most effective organizational structure” varies “according to the situation of the organization.”<sup>541</sup> If an organization seeks to maximize its overall performance, it must be sure that “there is a fit between the organizational structure and contingency.”<sup>542</sup> Put another way, “contingency theorists try to predict the performance or effectiveness of an organization based on the extent to which the organization’s structure matches contextual contingencies such as organizational size, technology, and the environment.”<sup>543</sup> In 2008, Abdulkader Sinno applied contingency theory to explain the outcomes of multiple Afghan conflicts. His findings are impressive, as they explain the success or failure of multiple Islamic militant groups. The fact he analyzed how organizational structures adapted to fit their given environment make his argument relevant to this study of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>544</sup> Whereas Sinno defined success as the political outcomes of battlefield engagements, success for the Klan as a terrorist organization can be measured according to its ability to sustain significant terrorist activity over the span of consecutive years.

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<sup>540</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Project, “Terror from the Right: 75 Plots, Conspiracies, and Racist Rampages since Oklahoma City,” in *Special Report*, ed. Southern Poverty Law Center (Montgomery, AL: SPLC, 2009). <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/terror-from-the-right>

<sup>541</sup> Lex Donaldson, *Contingency Theory*, History of Management Thought (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Dartmouth, 1995), xi.

<sup>542</sup> Lex Donaldson, *The Contingency Theory of Organizations*, Foundations for Organizational Science (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2001).

<sup>543</sup> Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 9.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

According to Sinno the presence or absence of a safe haven is critically important. In Sinno's words, a safe haven "is a portion of the contested territory where an organization's rivals cannot intervene with enough force to disturb its operations."<sup>545</sup> By using this definition, Sinno is adopting a traditional (typically COIN-centric) view of a safe haven since his inclusion of the term "territory" automatically places primacy on control over a geographic area. It is here where I part ways with Sinno. This dissertation suggests there is value in broadening the notion of safe haven for application to the domain of terrorism. From a terrorism studies perspective, Sinno's definition is unnecessarily reductive, for terrorists rarely seek to establish or control territory from which to operate. Paul Pillar, former deputy chief of the CIA's Counterterrorism Center and now director of Georgetown's Security Studies Graduate Programs, recently highlighted the limited usefulness of geography by asking "how important to terrorist groups is any physical safe haven?"<sup>546</sup> His answer? Not as much as we tend to believe. Michael Innes followed up on Pillar's argument, asserting that "Washington needs to broaden and diversify its understanding of safe havens if it intends to end them."<sup>547</sup> This dissertation agrees, and, thus has considered safe havens to include legal, judicial, and societal factors which provide terrorist organizations the operational freedom necessary to carry out a campaign of terrorism.

Definitional differences aside, Sinno submits that where a safe haven exists, a centralized organization will prove more effective than a decentralized one. His argument rests on a widely held belief that a centralized organization is far more efficient at formulating and implementing a strategy, coordinating efforts among organization members, mobilizing resources, enforcing discipline, developing intraorganizational cohesion, and generating and preserving knowledge.<sup>548</sup> Conversely, where there is no safe haven, a decentralized organization makes sense since it can be more resilient. The

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>546</sup> Paul Pillar, "Who's Afraid of a Terrorist Haven?," *The Washington Post* September 16, 2009.

<sup>547</sup> Michael Innes, "The Safe Haven Myth," *Foreign Policy* (12 October 2009).

<sup>548</sup> Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, 46. Russell Hardin, *One for All : The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); James L. Gibson, *Organizations : Behavior, Structure, Processes*, 14th ed. (Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill, 2011).

study of Klan terrorist campaigns supports these findings.<sup>549</sup> The graphic depiction below, based off the findings of this dissertation, provides readers a basic overview of this argument.

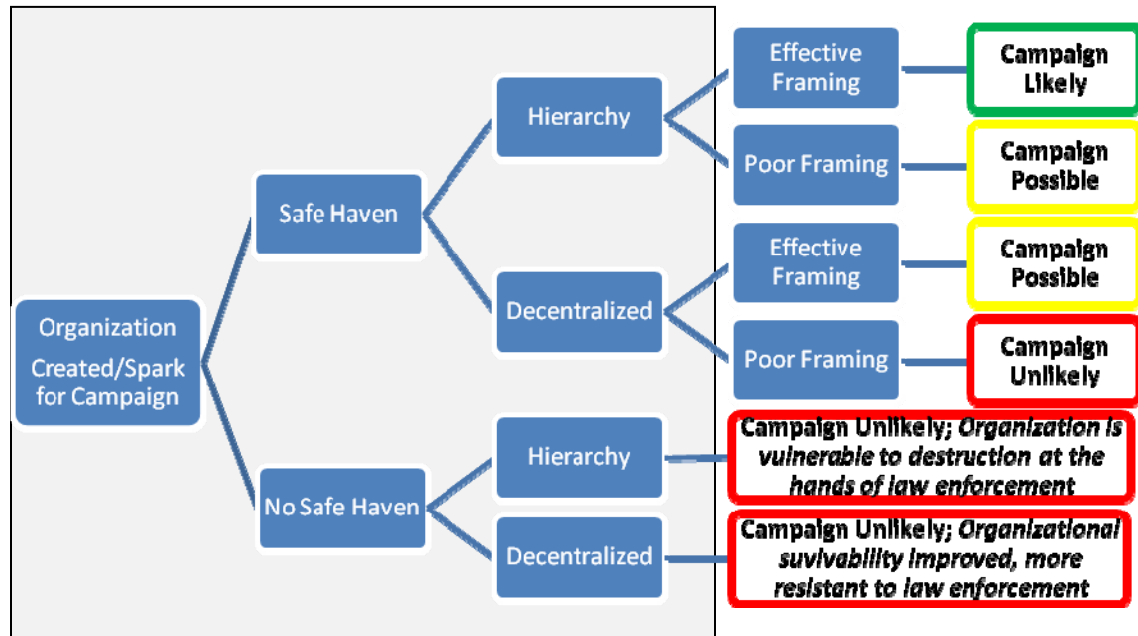


Figure 1. The Pathway to Terrorism Campaigns

## 1. The Relationship Between Organizational Structure and Safe Havens

This dissertation finds that the presence of legal, societal, and/or judicial safe havens was a necessary condition for the emergence of a Klan terrorist campaign. In the case of the Klan this meant the ability to carry out specific acts of terrorism when law enforcement, politicians, media outlets, and society either turned a blind eye or actively assisted. When and where the Klan was provided such freedom of operational maneuver, a centralized organizational design proved far more effective in generating and sustaining terrorist campaigns. To clarify the concept, a period-by-period overview is provided.

<sup>549</sup> With regards to Sinno's work, this dissertation asserts that too much emphasis is placed on organizational design at the expense of investigating why particular organizations have mass appeal. He overvalues organizational design while undervaluing ideological appeal. This dissertation seeks a more appropriate balance between the two.

During the 1860s, the Klan enjoyed legal and judicial immunity throughout most areas of the former Confederate state. Even before the Civil War began, paterollers—groups of men that hunted down slaves or were called to “enforce discipline” on plantations—were an accepted facet of Southern life. The fear of slave insurrections and the subsequent overthrow of the government were foremost in the minds of plantation owners and politicians of the day—a fear rendered real by the successful slave-led 1791-1804 revolution in Haiti.

Drawing from widely held convictions about scientific racism (discussed more fully below), violence committed against blacks was viewed as a necessary evil. Among many whites, it was widely accepted as the only method through which to control a particularly dangerous segment of society. In the words of Carl Schurtz, “the maiming and killing of colored men seems to be looked upon by many as one of those venial offenses which must be forgiven to the outraged feelings of a wronged and robbed people.”<sup>550</sup> Following the emancipation of the slaves, anti-black violence was considered even more forgivable as blacks no longer had a “master” responsible for their actions and would thus require the collective; disciplining required collective efforts of the entire community. Although blacks could be legally taken to court for their crimes, this was a time-consuming process, and community leaders felt more immediate, extrajudicial means of punishment were necessary to keep the black community in check.

Only a small ideological shift was required to turn the wrath of the Klan from former slaves to the scalawags and carpetbaggers who advocated on their behalf. To the white Southern community, this was the ultimate betrayal; the Radical Republicans were actively planting the seeds for a Haitian-like slave revolt in the South. To make matters worse, these were whites who, in the eyes of many Southerners, should have had the intelligence to realize what they were doing. The election of blacks to state offices—the first step towards “black rule” of the South—was viewed as a clear precursor to revolt. Disenfranchising Confederate soldiers was taken as further evidence of Northern hatred

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<sup>550</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, xvi.

for the South. In an effort to maintain stability and prevent revolution, law enforcement organizations and politicians left the Klan to its work. A safe haven was thus theirs for the taking, and the 1860s Klan made the most of this.

Enjoying a virtual dominion over the South, the 1860s Ku Klux Klan was created on a military template. The national organization—called the Empire—was designed to be run by a Grand Wizard; each state—or Realm—had a Grand Dragon who reported to the Imperial Headquarters. Each realm was broken down into congressional districts, called Dominions, and further by counties, or Provinces. Each level of command was assigned a certain number of staff positions to be filled, and all state officers and above had to be selected through an elaborate voting process.

Historical accounts often portray the 1860s Klan as more organizationally decentralized than this dissertation finds it to have been.<sup>551</sup> Accounts often claim the 1860s Klan was organizationally tight at the local levels, but missing a link somewhere between the Dens and Realms. These narratives also classify organizations such as the White Camellias and Pale Faces as rival groups to the national Klan. This thesis deviates from these views of the Klan. Ample evidence exists to suggest the Klan was capable of trans-Dominion and trans-Realm coordination. The relationship between the Klan and other white supremacist organizations in the South also bore a greater resemblance to a semi-cooperative 1970s Palestine Liberation Organization than to any extant competing individual groups. Some historians argue that these other organizations were simply a front for a Forrest-controlled Klan; designed to create even greater confusion about Klan activity.<sup>552</sup>

Although most communications records between the Grand Wizard, Grand Dragons, and Grand Titans were burned around 1869, evidence suggests Forrest and his Dragons played more of an operational role than they are normally credited with. First,

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<sup>551</sup> For example see: Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*; Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*.

<sup>552</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 185-86. *The Nation's Peril. Twelve Years' Experience in the South. Then and Now. The Ku Klux Klan, a Complete Exposition of the Order: Its Purpose, Plans, Operations, Social and Political Significance; the Nation's Salvation*.

Forrest filled each state leadership position with former Confederate generals, many of which were personal friends. Second, he visited them on his normal railroad insurance rounds. Men like General George Gordon (Tennessee Grand Dragon), General John Morgan (Alabama), General Robert Shaver (Arkansas), General John Gordon (Georgia), and General Zacariah George (Mississippi) were but a few of his personal associates. Operating under the military maxim “centralized control, decentralized execution,” these men were given initial marching orders via a Prescript, updated by periodic strategic guidance from the Memphis headquarters, and provided operational freedom of maneuver from Forrest.

The Prescript and other documents were found in each Den. Members knew their place in the hierarchy and acted accordingly. The Prescript established a method of secret communications which allowed Klansmen—in theory at least—to meet and operations without curious bystanders knowing the actual content of the discussion. Prominent Klan leaders—many former Confederate officers themselves—ensured tight local hierarchy and obedience to the Grand Wizard through their respective Grand Dragons. With this organization, and such a safe haven in which to operate, the 1860s Klan went on to lead what many consider a successful insurgent campaign which ensured that white supremacy continued for several decades thereafter.

The 1920s Klan did not enjoy as free of a hand as its predecessor, but it still operated in an environment in which violence remained acceptable against certain people. For example, between 1882 and 1934 over five thousand people—mainly Southern black men—were murdered by lynch mobs. In Georgia alone, 549 people were lynched, and the state responded by prosecuting a grand total of one person for the campaign of death.<sup>553</sup> Although violence was still the norm between 1880 and 1915, very little should be attributed to the Klan as an organization; in the words of Klan historian David Chalmers “if the baser sort rode out at night, it was not as a Klansman.”<sup>554</sup> Also, safe havens were still readily available.

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<sup>553</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 34.

<sup>554</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism : The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 22.

For instance, more than 30,000 ministers, police and judges joined the 1920s Klan, a combination which simultaneously provided moral legitimization and legal and judicial safe havens. In Atlanta, Georgia, “everybody in the courthouse belonged to the Klan, virtually every judge, the prosecuting officers...all the police and the mayor and the councilmen.”<sup>555</sup> In Oklahoma, the Klan was used as an effective arm of the law bringing bootleggers to justice. Further north, following multiple acts of Klan/police collusion, Oregon Governor Ben Olcott commented that “we woke up one morning and found the Klan had about gained political control of the state...not a word had been raised against them.”<sup>556</sup> Thanks to the widely propagated, surprisingly popular myth that portrayed the Klan as “defenders of the Lost Cause,” the Klan found a sympathetic population nationwide. Due to its broad appeal and ability to deliver votes, few politicians or law enforcement officials dared act against it. The 1920s Klan was therefore able to break its Southern boundaries and find safe havens across the country.

Choosing the proper structure in the presence of such safety, the 1920s Klan established an even tighter hierarchy than had its Reconstruction predecessor. Imperial Wizard William Joseph Simmons would alter the national organization by only a few degrees with the release of new Klan policies contained in *The Kloran* (which like the new name for the organization’s leader, was apparently intended to be a grander title than Prescript.) The organization was a rather simple one before 1920. But having grown from a mere 3,000 members in 1919 to over 800,000 by 1921, the Klan required a significant organizational redesign to manage its people.<sup>557</sup> To better control its growing numbers (and its bankroll), Simmons authorized the establishment of the Propagation Department, and named Edward Clarke the Imperial Kleagle—or chief of staff—responsible for managing finances and personnel. Subsequently, each level of command received a staff responsible for personnel issues. This staff was also responsible for coordinating events, scheduling educational seminars, and selecting ministers to spread

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<sup>555</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 18.

<sup>556</sup> Thomas J. Shelley, “The Oregon School Case and the National Catholic Welfare Conference,” *The Catholic Historical Review* Vol 75, no. No. 3 (July 1989).

<sup>557</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 15.

the reach of the Klan. Except for the addition of an “Emperor”—a figurehead position created to pacify Simmons after his ouster—and the addition of a logistical wing, the Ku Klux Klan retained a structure remarkably similar to that of the Reconstruction era Klan. The main difference was that more power was held at the top, requiring greater communication from the Realms to the Imperial Headquarters. Again, this centralization proved effective as the Klan prospered throughout the country, swelling to over 4,000,000 hooded members and gaining political prominence as it grew.

Following the 1925 scandal involving Indiana Grand Dragon D.C. Stevenson, the once united organization began to unravel. The benefits of centralized command would be further forfeited following the 1949 death of Imperial Wizard Dr. Samuel Green. Green was the lynchpin who held many Klaverns within the orbit of the Atlanta Headquarters. After a heart attack unexpectedly took his life, many groups broke away from the national headquarters and set out on their own. Decentralization was underway, and not by strategic design.

Locating a safe haven from which to operate would grow increasingly difficult following the downfall of the 1920s Klan. Whereas the 1860s Klan found refuge broadly throughout the South and the 1920s Klan flourished nationally, the 1950s Klan only found small pockets of sanctuary in the Deep South. Most active in Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina, the Klan—for once—began to face broad opposition from a previously friendly law enforcement community, as well as from politicians (pressured by leaders of commerce) who realized racist violence was bad for their city’s trade. By the late 1950s, the Klan no longer had the numbers—which could translate into votes—to appeal to politicians. Caught in a broader environment that had largely turned against racist ideology and no longer protected by politicians at the national level, the Klan felt the pressure and only found relief in areas where lawmen remained sympathetic; havens had largely dried up to a few scattered locales.

As 1954 approached with the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling which triggered the third major campaign of Ku Klux terrorism, the Ku Klux Klan was in organizational disarray. At least eight similar-sized Klan organizations existed in 1954, many of which would splinter further the following year. This decentralizing trend was soon reversed



thanks to an auto mechanic from Atlanta. By 1956, Eldon Edwards was able to reunify several of the independent Klans and could boast command over 10,000 Klansman in eight different states by the close of the year.<sup>558</sup> Edwards' unexpected death in 1960 would lead to further consolidation under Robert Shelton. Upon assuming the title of Imperial Wizard, Shelton went to work merging the competing Klans. By 1964, Shelton commanded the allegiance of the largest unified Klan front—an organization consisting of approximately 4,500 members spread through one hundred and eleven Klaverns in seven different states.<sup>559</sup>

Although Shelton commanded the largest contingent of Klansmen, his was not the only hooded organization to lay claim to the Klan brand. At least fourteen other Klan organizations—most having fewer than one hundred members—were in competition with Shelton's United Klans of America. According to FBI reports, these leaders found little common ground:

Klan leaders are opportunistic, unscrupulous, ruthless men who are constantly sparring for power and vying with each other for leadership and control of the various Klans. Each organization engages in what amounts to guerrilla warfare with the others.<sup>560</sup>

The UKA boasted, by far, the largest membership among the rival Klans, but the moderately decentralized nature of the Klan prevented the same overall strategic mobility or coordinating prowess demonstrated by the 1860s and 1920s Klans. Additionally, unable to enforce discipline within its ranks, the Klan was torn apart from the inside, as unsatisfied defectors gladly spoke with investigators, and FBI informants replaced those who left. Even at its most centralized point, the Klan was no longer organizationally capable of coordinating and executing a strong, sustained campaign. The constant infighting only exacerbated these shortcomings.

Without a safe haven from which to operate, the post-Civil Rights Klan decentralized and, whether intentionally or as a byproduct of internal fisticuffs, adopted a

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>559</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Klan Organizations: Section III 1958-1964," page 64, Topical Monographs, Box 10, Record Group 65, National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

<sup>560</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Klan Organizations: Section III 1958-1964," page 67, Topical Monographs, Box 10, Record Group 65, National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

cellular structure which, in turn, maximized its chances of survival while minimizing the chances of sustainable terrorist actions. Paranoia about law enforcement infiltration became the common theme of Klans throughout the country, and rarely would one group coordinate with another for fear of passing information to an FBI informant. The second order effect of this organizational decentralization was the wholesale inability of the Klan to direct or sustain a campaign of terrorism. The atomized Klan of the late 1970s and 1980s fostered sporadic “lone wolf” acts of terrorism, but following these acts, the offending Klansman would invariably be hunted down and jailed while the Klan to which he belonged would often disavow any relations with him.

Gone too were the days of sympathetic mythologized history and political top-cover. Now in competition with neo-Nazi, militia, survivalist, and “Patriot” groups, the Klan became the laughingstock of the radical right. Says one right wing terrorism expert, “the rest of the radical right looks down their noses at them today, seeing them, essentially, as buffoons or trailer trash.”<sup>561</sup> In fact, the Klan itself became the victim of mythologized history, as many today view Klansmen—past and present—as uneducated rednecks, a claim that is more fiction than fact when considering the entire legacy of the Klan.

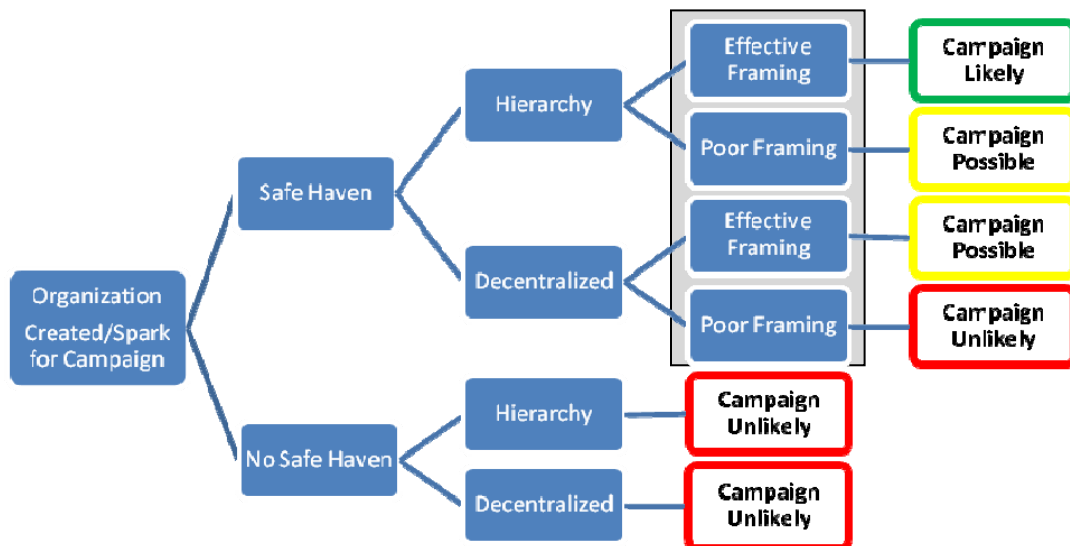


Figure 2. The Pathway to Terrorism Campaigns (2nd Stage)

<sup>561</sup> Mark Potok. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011.

## 2. The Power of Effective Framing

Tailoring an organization's structure to the presence of safe havens is critically important, but is only one piece of the puzzle. A terrorist organization is destined to die without an effective method to sustain members and grow in size. This points to a group's ability to recruit. The following section will explore both the content and the distribution methods of Klan recruitment messages. Akin to the "fit" between an organizational structure and the environment, a recruitment pitch must possess a similar fit with beliefs at large in society. A concept that social movement scholars dub framing, defines this interplay as "an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment."<sup>562</sup> Following the crafting of a proper frame, important aspects for terrorist messaging are specifying diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational tasks. Diagnostic tasks pertain to the assigning of blame for whatever grievance the organization has decided to adjust its frame to. For the Klan, African Americans have always served the lead role, although various other groups have had their turn as Klan targets. Prognostic tasks define for an organization the remedies required to eliminate either the people or structures that have been assigned blame. Finally, motivational tasks are those which keep individual members together in a cohesive unit and compel them to violence.<sup>563</sup>

Klan recruitment messages have varied wildly according to the societal context at the time. The most effective messages were ones in which leaders correctly assessed the ills of society, assigned blame for those ills, and offered the Klan as the remedy—

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<sup>562</sup> David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 137. See also: Myra Marx Ferree and Frederick D. Miller, "Mobilization and Meaning: Toward an Integration of Social Psychological and Resource Perspectives on Social Movements," *Sociological Inquiry* 55, no. 1 (January 1985); Bert Klandermans, "Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory," *American Sociological Review* 49, no. 5 (October 1984); Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26(2000). R.H. Williams and T.J. Kubal, "Movement Frames and the Cultural Environment: Resonance, Failure, and the Boundaries of the Legitimate," *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change* 21(1999).

<sup>563</sup> David A. Snow Scott A. Hunt, and Robert D. Benford, "Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Social Construction of Movement Identities," in *New Social Movements*, ed. Hank Johnston Enrique Larana, and Joseph Gusfield (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

meeting the framing, diagnostic, and prognostic task sets. While recruitment messages were tweaked over the years, a few underlying concepts remained constant. The first deals with a Klan promise to “defend the sanctity of white womanhood,” a concept which has appealed to white males throughout time. Second is a promotion of the white race as superior to all others; this has had diminishing appeal since the 1860s. The ability to weave these beliefs into recruitment messages—in some cases, purposefully downplaying them—has proven critical.

The Reconstruction era Klan’s recruitment message focused on the Klan’s role as the last bastion of Southern defense against Northern aggression. That the North was actually drawing down troop strength, packing up, and heading home, was irrelevant. The Klan capitalized Southerners’ conviction that the South was being forced into subjugation by Northern policies, and it manipulated its tone to fit the vocabulary of the southern gentleman. Proclaiming itself, “an Institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism,” the 1860s Klan buried its racist ideology under a veil of Southern patriotism and defensive action.<sup>564</sup> With this effective frame in hand, the Klan then addressed its diagnostic tasks. The Klan effectively painted Union Leagues as the embodiment of Radical Republican efforts to undermine Southern society and demanded Klan members focus their violence on League members and supporters. It was not difficult to expand the scope of violence by re-aligning these message frames to include scalawags, carpetbaggers, schoolteachers, and Republicans. To rid the South of its problems, the Klan prescribed terrorist action, and motivated its members with the appeal of clandestine socialization and fraternity.

In 1915, Simmons largely missed in matching the Klan’s message to the social narrative of the time. Simmons sought to sell the Klan as the heir of the Reconstruction era’s saviors of the South. Launched on the heels of *The Birth of a Nation*, this message

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<sup>564</sup> Ku Klux Klan, “Prescript of the Order of the \*\*\*, 1868” in, Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, Appendix B, 428.

had some appeal, but not enough to spur rapid growth. This would change in 1920 when broadly-crafted Klan messages—drafted by propaganda experts—fastened onto America’s dominant social narrative.

The 1920s Klan led with a theme of “100% Americanism,” offering law enforcement a hand in cleaning the streets of bootleggers, loose women, communist sympathizers, and troublemakers. Klan recruiters were given a broad theme and were told to adapt it to local conditions.<sup>565</sup> According to one narrative, “there were no typical Klansmen and no single reason for belonging to the Ku Klux Klan...E.Y. Clarke and associates organized a highly flexible public relations campaign with appeals and propaganda that could easily be adapted to suit the distinctive moods, fears and desires of individuals.”<sup>566</sup> Though this framing it produced situations in which the program in one area would contradict a program in another, the approach was successful in gathering foot soldiers under the Klan tent. Where messages in support of Prohibition resonated, the Klan diagnosed bootleggers as the social ill. Where an anti-Catholic message resonated, Catholics were targeted. All immigrants, being non-American by Klan definition, were appropriate recipients of targeted terrorist action. When the opportunity presented itself, the Klan reframed its message to better appeal to the emerging fundamentalist movement, shifting targets to include loose women, immoral men, and those who were perceived to not embody Protestant values.

The recruitment content of the 1860s and the 1920s Klan resonated well among a broad population. Recruitment efforts after 1950 had far less appeal. The 1950s Klan reverted to an overtly racist recruitment pitch only to find it no longer resonated. The Klan’s pool of respectable recruits had effectively dried up. Here is the FBI’s description:

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<sup>565</sup> One of the best descriptions of Klan propaganda techniques during this period can be found in an unpublished thesis: Shotwell, “Crystallizing Public Hatred: Ku Klux Klan Public Relations in the Early 1920s.”

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 72.

The Klan, for the most part, is composed of individuals of mediocre background, limited education, and an extremely narrow, fanatical outlook who, except for the Negro, are usually at or near the bottom of the social ladder<sup>567</sup>

The Klan attempted to frame social problems in the form of school desegregation, a message that had limited appeal nationwide. Preferred targets, of course, were African Americans—especially those who attempted to demand equality in social standing or education. Armed with a recruitment pitch that targeted only a narrow swath of society, the Klan could only muster about 15,000 scattered between its three strands. With limited safe havens and only moderately effective message framing techniques the 1950–1960s Klan was eventually defeated by the Civil Rights movement and national law enforcement.

If the 1950s and 1960s proved barren for Klan recruitment efforts, the 1970s and 1980s were worse. Due to its rigid adherence to racist messages, by the 1970s the Klan proved ineffective at locating mainstream beliefs to tap into. Around 1960, after being shunned by Protestant churches, the Klan began to experiment with an ideology known as Christian Identity.<sup>568</sup> Whereas earlier Klans had built recruitment efforts on a vision of American power that had been “lost,” modern Klans adopted revolutionary rather than restorationist ideologies.<sup>569</sup> “History had moved against the Klan,” according to right wing expert Mark Potok. “The Klan became more and more desperate,” a desperation which revealed itself as the organization went from “defenders of mainline Protestantism to being very largely Christian Identity.”<sup>570</sup> This ideological shift further crippled the Klan, prompting law enforcement officials to conclude that in the mid-1970s, “by and large, the Klan has been shunned by educated people, by members of the professions, and by business leaders. Most Klan leaders and members were born and have lived most of their lives in areas where racial, ethnic, and religious prejudices are deep seated. They

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<sup>567</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Klan Organizations: Section III 1958-1964,” page iv, Topical Monographs, Box 10, Record Group 65, National Archives Building, College Park MD.

<sup>568</sup> The shift towards Christian Identity likely came during the 1960s as the Klan interacted with George Lincoln Rockwell of the American Nazi Party, an atheist who saw the potential of the ideology: Mark Potok. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011.

<sup>569</sup> Mark Potok. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

have limited educations and parochial outlooks and interests.”<sup>571</sup> In the wake of a shift from mainstream Christianity to Christian Identity, the Klan no longer possessed a widely credible recruitment message.

*a. Getting the Word Out: Klan Message Dissemination*

Crafting an effective message is only one element of a successful recruitment effort; disseminating that message is equally important. With the rise of instantaneous communications, we tend to overlook the importance and difficulty that information dissemination can pose, something most successful Klan organizations recognized.

For instance, the Reconstruction era Klan, thanks to the broad support of the population, used local newspapers to send operational information throughout the South. Uncooperative—mostly Republican—newspapers were routinely torched. To the uninitiated, these messages might appear as garbled mumbo jumbo; to Klansmen, they had an operational meaning. Also, Forrest, a travelling insurance salesman, could spread the word and establish new Klaverns in areas not be reached through sympathetic newspapers.

Flush in cash, the 1920s Klan stood up its own information dissemination section under Edward Clarke. Clarke broke his publications into two separate branches. The national periodical, *The Searchlight* was sold at newsstands and intended for a wide public audience. Bearing the motto “Free Speech; Free Press; White Supremacy,” the newspaper targeted potential recruits and highlighted the benevolent deeds of the hooded empire.<sup>572</sup> For internal information dissemination, the Klan relied upon *The Imperial Knight-Hawk*, a paper intended “to carry a weekly message from the Imperial Palace to every Klansman in the country.”<sup>573</sup> This publication passed along notices about upcoming rallies and highlighted the activities of outstanding Klaverns across the

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<sup>571</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Part 1: Klan Organizations” page 9, Topical Monographs, Box 15, Record Group 65, National Archives Building, College Park, MD.

<sup>572</sup> Shotwell, “Crystallizing Public Hatred: Ku Klux Klan Public Relations in the Early 1920s,” 114.

<sup>573</sup> *The Imperial Knight-Hawk*, July 25, 1923. 4.

country. In addition, local Klaverns were encouraged to produce their own newsletters tailored to local conditions as an additional means of recruitment.

The Klans of the 1950- 1960s and the 1970–1980s were financially strapped, and their information dissemination methods reflected it. No longer capable of using sympathetic newspapers free of charge, the Klan returned to newsletters, albeit in cheaper, more vulgar publications. Telephone networks became the main method for passing information, a system which kept Klansmen relatively attuned to operations, but failed to expand the overall size of the Klan. FBI informants routinely leaked the minutes from Klavern meetings, and the media picked up and ran stories mocking the Klan for its outrageous beliefs. By the 1970s things had gone from bad to worse, as watchdog groups began to expose internal communications and pressure law enforcement officials to step up their monitoring efforts when these were found lacking. Unable to extend its recruitment message beyond a small circle of friends and kin, the modern Klan entered a process of organizational decay.

#### ***b. The Role of Intellectuals: Enhancers of Klan Terrorism***

Thus far, we can say that what helps determine the sustainment of a terrorist campaign are the actions and decisions made by those in power. One factor beyond the control of that organization, however, is the air of respectability provided through the writings, speeches, or public works of prominent socioeconomic elites.<sup>574</sup> The collective promotion of these works can create an intellectual environment conducive to or critical of campaigns of terrorism.<sup>575</sup>

The 1867 Klan campaign, for instance, was enhanced by the near-universal Western belief in scientific racism. In fact, many of our esteemed founding

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<sup>574</sup> Robert Dahl, “A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model,” *The American Political Science Review* 52, no. 2 (June 1958); Geraint Parry, *Political Elites*, Studies in Political Science, 5 (New York,: Praeger, 1969), Chapter 1.

<sup>575</sup> The dissertation is not submitting that these intellectual environments are causes of Klan campaigns, instead, it submits – as the section title indicates – that the environment enhanced Klan efforts to sustain campaigns, as the society was more willing to empathize with their stated ends, if not their ways. Nor does the dissertation claim Klan leaders had read and were well versed in these publications. The ideas generated by these works were so widely discussed and well known that most ordinary Americans would have been exposed to their underlying assertions.



fathers ascribed to the tenets of scientific racism. Michael Hunt hammers home this point in a 1987 work, bringing attention to the fact that even Benjamin Franklin “that paragon of Enlightenment optimism, versatility, and virtue, was also a racist.”<sup>576</sup> Thomas Jefferson could be added to the list. By today’s standards, even that paragon of Civil War liberalism, President Abraham Lincoln can be considered racist for his beliefs in racial inequality.<sup>577</sup>

Originating in the early 1700s, scientific racism gained real traction with the mid-to-late 18th century works of Johann Blumenbach and Georges-Louis LeClerc. Both men promoted a theory according to which some races devolved since the creation of Adam and Eve, who were considered the first members of the (highest) Caucasian race.<sup>578</sup> By the 1800s, scientific racism focused on uncovering the origins of humankind. An “American school” of ethnology emerged through the works of Samuel Morton, George Gliddon, Josiah Nott, and Ephraim Squier. These men, between 1839 and 1859, advanced the theory of polygenesis; according to them the various human races were created separately.<sup>579</sup> The societal impacts of such works was profound. Scientific racism served as a justification for Southern claims that blacks must be watched over, since, as members of an inferior race, they were incapable of self-management and prone to violent revolt; slavery, therefore, was in the best interests of both blacks and society at large.<sup>580</sup> These beliefs were not constrained to the South, as Hunt points out: “though

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<sup>576</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 46.

<sup>577</sup> For the full argument Lincoln was a racist, see: Lerone Bennett, *Forced into Glory : Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co., 2000). Or: Michael Vorenberg, “Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 14, no. 2 (1993).

<sup>578</sup> Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment : A Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997).

<sup>579</sup> Reginald Horsman, “Scientific Racism and the American Indian in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *American Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (May 1975).

<sup>580</sup> For an excellent overview of the development of scientific racism in America, see: William Ragan Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

whites often disagreed on aspects of the ‘Negro Question,’ sometimes emotionally so, they nonetheless agreed almost universally on the fundamental issue of white supremacy and black inferiority.”<sup>581</sup>

These ideas were so deeply imbued so that by the time of the American Civil War both academic writings and “folklore of the region stigmatized enslaved blacks as incipient insurrectionists and brooding rapists.”<sup>582</sup> There should be no wonder, then, that the Klan was able to morally justify the violence it inflicted on blacks or those who sought to go against “science” through the promotion of the equality of races. The intellectual environment of the time made it incredibly easy for the Klan to demonize and dehumanize its enemy, a factor, terrorism expert Mark Jurgensmeyer argues, that is necessary to sustain terrorism.<sup>583</sup>

Moving onto beliefs at large during the 1920s, scientific racism had become more “scientific” with the promulgation of eugenics. In an attempt to rid society of “unfit,” scientists like Charles Davenport promoted the idea that certain undesirable traits were hereditary and efforts should be made to purge communities of their undesirables. If a person was deemed “feebleminded” or “sexually promiscuous” s/he should be sterilized in order to minimize the costs to society. Eugenics was so broadly accepted that by the mid-1970s over 60,000 Americans had been involuntarily sterilized.<sup>584</sup> The effects of American eugenics studies spilled beyond US borders; one study argues that it was these works that were the basis for later Nazi sterilization and eradication campaigns.<sup>585</sup> So prevalent was the idea of eugenics and scientific racism that President Theodore Roosevelt threw his support behind it, writing a letter to Davenport agreeing that “society has no business to permit degenerates to reproduce their

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<sup>581</sup> Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 51.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God : The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Chapter 9: Martyrs and Demons

<sup>584</sup> Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics : Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1985).

<sup>585</sup> Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection : Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

kind.... Some day we will realize that the prime duty, the inescapable duty of the good citizen of the right type is to leave his blood behind him in the world, and that we have no business to perpetuate citizens of the wrong type.”<sup>586</sup> Here is a clear example of the less-than-scientific work of the scientific racists being promoted and validated by even the most educated and well respected members of American society.

In addition to being able to draw comfortably on eugenics-based scientific racism, the 1920s Klan also enjoyed an extra layer of academic top-cover from unabashedly pro-South historians like William Dunning, Merton Coulter, C.W. Ramsdell, and Claude Bowers. Their formulation of the romantic “Lost Cause” of the Confederacy helped the war’s losers to exonerate “the South from any responsibility in bringing on the conflict and helping Southerners then and later cope with defeat.”<sup>587</sup> That such histories could be crafted should come as no surprise. It is natural, even common, for the defeated in war to mythologize history in order to explain losses and reaffirm national and moral superiority. Going beyond coping with wartime loss, this actually serves to “make defeat feel like victory.”<sup>588</sup> The myth of the Lost Cause achieved these aims, and more. The myth’s second order effect was to pave the way for the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.

It would be wrong to place the blame for the 1920s Klan campaign at the feet of Dunning school historians, just as it would be wrong to argue that they did not play an enabling role. The less than neutral scholarship of these academics built a narrative—adopted in varying degrees nationwide—which transformed Confederate generals into demigods and portrayed the antebellum South as a pure and harmonious society. In these works, too, the Klan was portrayed as being a purely defensive group in

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<sup>586</sup> S. Jay Olshansky, “Human by Design,” *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 79, no. 2 (June 2004): 182.

<sup>587</sup> William C. Davis, *The Cause Lost : Myths and Realities of the Confederacy*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 177.

<sup>588</sup> Daniel Moran, “Book Review: *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*,” *Strategic Insights* III, no. 6 (June 2004).

the face of Union League atrocities and serving as a unifying factor between the North and South after the war, since it declared itself ready to defend and promote the entirety of the Aryan nation.

Numerous scholars who disagreed with this revisionism failed to voice their criticism in the face of potential retribution. Said one Georgia professor, “the trouble with us is that we have as little courage as we have voice, but with things as they are now in Georgia, more courage would mean martyrdom, not of the effective variety.”<sup>589</sup> Thanks to the active efforts of pro-South scholars combined with the general timidity of those who opposed their work, a mythologized history was reinvigorated.

Building atop this academically-validated myth, Thomas Dixon wrote a series of books which painted the Ku Klux Klan as freedom fighting saviors of the South. His 1902 book *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden* portrayed the Klan as a purely defensive organization comprised of Southern patriots fighting to maintain morality in the face of unconstitutional Northern aggression.<sup>590</sup> Although the book was well-received, his 1905 work *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* was even more significant, sparking the interest of movie producer D.W. Griffith.<sup>591</sup> In turn, Griffith would produce the 1915 blockbuster *The Birth of a Nation*, which would push this romanticized ideal into households nationwide. William Simmons, the Imperial Wizard of the “second wave” Klan, used all this publicity to his advantage, swelling Klan ranks to over 4,000,000 by 1924.

Tapping into yet another well of beliefs, the Klan of the 1920s also grafted itself onto the burgeoning fundamentalist movement. The relationship between Protestantism and militant Christianity provided the Klan with moral high ground that boosted its image as a organization of hooded white knights dedicated to the Lost Cause. From its role in defense of the Southern Lost Cause the Klan simply expanded its role to

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<sup>589</sup> MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry : The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan*, 16.

<sup>590</sup> Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots; a Romance of the White Man's Burden 1865-1900* (New York,: Doubleday, Page & co., 1902).

<sup>591</sup> Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York,: Doubleday, Page & company, 1905).

defense of a much larger cause, that of holy nationalism. To accomplish this, the Klan offered defense of “100% Americanism,” blending Protestant fundamentalism with ultranationalistic sentiment.

Mythologized history and “intellectual top-cover” were largely absent—or discredited as the case may be—during the final two periods studied in this dissertation; a fact that helps explain their localized nature and/or overall failure. The 1950s Klan returned to concepts of scientific racism only to find that American society had largely moved beyond such ideas. No longer accepted or promoted by mainstream Protestant churches, Klan leaders found little social sympathy for their racist agenda. During the 1970s, one branch of the Klan would attempt to shift tracks and appeal to a more refined crowd. Following David Duke’s failed attempt to appeal to white intellectuals during the 1970s and 1980s, however, the Klan seemed to accept its fate and migrate to Christian Identity beliefs, a “religion” largely practiced only on the modern radical right.

Unable to recruit as broadly as their 1860s and 1920s predecessors, the 1950–1960s and 1970–1980s Klans could only attract either members of the lower economic classes (who tended to be less educated) or borderline sociopaths. This trend endures today. Of those considering themselves Klansmen, 0% are from advantaged backgrounds, 25% are from intermediate social classes, while the remaining 75% are considered disadvantaged.<sup>592</sup> While the modern Klan—referring here to the post-1970 variants which have adopted Identity beliefs—has struggled to build on its inherited mythologized histories, other right wing extremist groups have internalized the need for academic and intellectual backing and have been successful in recruiting engineers, scientists, small business owners, and soldiers by modifying recruitment pitches to built on a mythologized belief in “Christian Patriotism.”<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America : From the Klan to Al Qaeda*, 72.

<sup>593</sup> Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door : The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*.

Mythologized history, far from being a sufficient cause of terrorism on its own, clearly served as an enhancing factor for the Klan.<sup>594</sup> Without a base of widely-held ideological support, organizations are forced to seek recruits from smaller (often psychologically riskier) pools of recruits. Today we see that those who have broadly popular ideological justification for their programs of terrorism—see Hamas, Al Qaeda, or Lashkar-e-Toiba—are able to draw from a much deeper, much broader pool.

### **3. Leaders as Lynchpins**

People matter. More importantly, leaders matter. A charismatic, intelligent, and savvy leader can mean the difference between success and failure, especially when it comes to such a high risk endeavor as managing and sustaining a campaign of terrorism. Much has been written about the effects of personal charisma on developing a charismatic community within an organization—a trait several Imperial Wizards possessed.<sup>595</sup> In all phases of the Klan's existence the quality of leadership proved a significant factor in determining the nature and trajectory of the Klan's terrorism campaign. More importantly still have been decisions made about determining the right organizational structure and the right recruitment pitch. Though no Klan leader could be mistaken for a MacArthur or a Churchill, the overall effectiveness of each Klan campaign can be attributed to the leadership acumen of the men who supervised it, especially regarding decisions at two key junctures.

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<sup>594</sup> The use of mythologized history was also used to great success by the Nazi Party as well as Franco. The former built upon the concept of *Volk*, the second, *Romanita*. See: Davies and Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right*, 115, 334.

<sup>595</sup> Weber, Roth, and Wittich, *Economy and Society : An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 241-54, 1121-57.

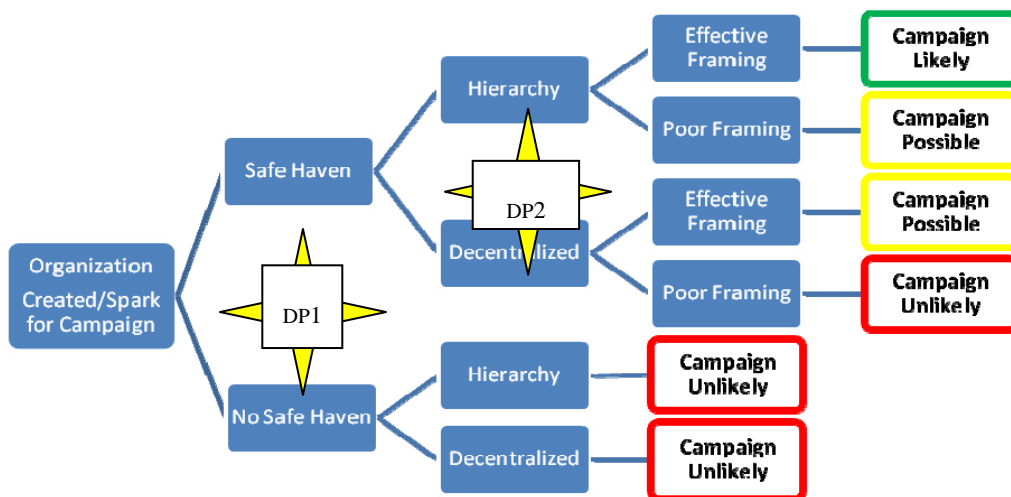


Figure 3. The Two Leadership Decision Points

*a. The Two Critical Decision Points*

The two relationships described in earlier sections—the “fit” between organizational structure and environment, and the proper framing of messages—do not happen by accident. They are both the product of leadership decisions. Klan leaders that chose the correct organization and followed with an effective message with broad appeal proved most capable of launching a campaign of sustainable terrorism.

The first decision point (labeled DP1 in the graphic above) involves a leader’s ability to recognize the dynamics of the environment and organize his group accordingly. Should a leader choose to organize hierarchically in an environment lacking a safe haven, his organization is likely to be destroyed since law enforcement units will be able to penetrate and systematically eliminate sub-leaders at every level. This is exactly what occurred to Robert Shelton during the FBI’s COINTELPRO initiatives. By maintaining a hierarchical structure in the face of overwhelming opposition, Shelton made the FBI task of decapitation an easy one. One by one, Klan leaders were arrested and prosecuted, and the now-leaderless Klan spun into disarray. Looking more broadly, we see something very similar with Aum Shinrikyo, Sendero Luminoso, the Partiya

Karkaren Kurdistan, and the pre-1998 Abu Sayyaf. All of these groups remained centralized even after they had been stripped of safe havens, and all fell victim to swift decapitation operations by the state.<sup>596</sup>

Where a terrorist organization has a safe haven, the decision to organize hierarchically can dramatically improve its chances of sustaining a terrorism campaign. During both the 1860s and 1920s, Imperial Wizards were able to standardize public messages, develop secure internal communications, manage Klan financial operations, and (sometimes) keep their followers' violence in check. Their centralized organizational structures also allowed Klan leaders to have a hand in crafting recruitment messages and developing a "public face" behind which to hide the more nefarious aspects of Klan operations.

This brings us to the second leadership decision point (DP2 on the model provided). When provided a safe haven, Klan leaders had the opportunity to launch a campaign of terrorism, but the probability of its coming to fruition depended on how the Imperial Wizard and his Imperial staff framed societal issues (and how effectively the Klan was portrayed as an acceptable remedy to those issues). Successful Klan leaders were able to hide some of the less appealing aspects of Klan ideology, focusing instead on the chivalrous, patriotic, defensive, or honorable aspects of the organization—false as that may have been. Forrest, for instance, promoted his Klan as a defensive unit designed to protect a virtuous Southern society (and white womanhood). Simmons and Evans painted the Klan as a morally upstanding group, tasked with defending the United States from drunkenness, sexual immorality, Communism, Catholicism, Judaism, and bound to uphold the Constitution as it was written by the forefathers. Shelton was less successful in portraying continued segregation as a form of anti-communism (although defense of white womanhood sold fairly well). Finally, although David Duke attempted to depict the Klan as "pro-White, not anti-Black," the actions of rival Klan leaders undermined this message. Consequently, the Klan became marginalized.

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<sup>596</sup> Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends : Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, 16-34.



### ***b. The Role of Charisma***

Max Weber famously detailed the effects a charismatic leader could have upon a collective in a series of posthumously published articles.<sup>597</sup> Weber explained that, unlike traditional types of authority, through which power is passed down, transferred, and bestowed upon a leader by virtue of title or rank, charismatic authority is developed and maintained in an entirely different manner. Charismatic authority derives from “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”<sup>598</sup> Admittedly a factor prone to subjective interpretation, nonetheless, the charismatic pull of a leader can help explain the appeal of the Ku Klux Klan as it embarked on its campaigns of terrorism.

The 1860s campaign was run by Confederate hero General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Known for his bold and ruthless maneuvers as a cavalry leader, Forrest became an easy choice for Grand Wizard due to his criminal actions at Fort Pillow in 1864. After capturing the Union garrison, Forrest ordered the outright slaughter of black Union troops who had already surrendered. In a note back to Confederate headquarters, Forrest boasted, “the river was dyed with the blood of the slaughtered for two hundred yards. It is hoped that these facts will demonstrate to the Northern people that Negro soldiers cannot cope with Southerners.”<sup>599</sup> While some viewed the incident with disgust, a majority in the South viewed Forrest’s actions as warranted and exceptional.

Little is known about Forrest’s actual role in coordinating the daily operations of the Klan, as most Klaverns burned their records in 1869, but by force of reputation alone he drew Southerners to the organization in droves. A recruitment poster in human form, Forrest enjoyed strong support from a professional staff well versed in the management of armies. Forrest drew upon his Confederate networks and, when “trusted Confederate officers could be persuaded to serve as Grand Dragons and Grand

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<sup>597</sup> Weber, Roth, and Wittich, *Economy and Society : An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>599</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 68.

Titans in their respective states, they could then undertake the formation of county and local units in their jurisdiction.”<sup>600</sup> By personally selecting trusted and loyal lieutenants, Forrest ensured organizational cohesion and ensured competent management of those under his command.

Forrest was also known for a darker side when it came to dealing with those who demonstrated disloyalty to the Klan. Whenever individual Klaverns exceeded the boundaries set by Imperial leaders, the repercussions could prove fatal. On one occasion, a Tennessee Grand Magi demonstrated a bit too much exuberance in his sanctioning of terrorism and, complicating his problems further, ignored Forrest’s calls for restraint. In response “General Forrest revealed (and later denied) that three Klansmen in Tennessee had suffered death for refusal to obey such orders.”<sup>601</sup> Forrest’s Prescript lays out in no uncertain terms his requirements for discipline and loyalty. Most important, however, may have been Forrest’s own tight-lipped nature concerning his involvement in the Klan. Although it was a well known fact that the General was the Grand Wizard, Forrest never admitted involvement in the organization. Even when put under oath, Forrest denied all ties. As he walked out of the Congressional hearing, Forrest smiled at a reporter and said he had “lied like a gentleman.”<sup>602</sup>

Possessing neither the stature nor military reputation of Forrest, William Simmons did maintain at least half of the elements required for effective leadership of the Klan. Known as an ambitious dreamer, Simmons spent time in the Army during the Spanish-American War before dabbling in the Methodist ministry. After being defrocked for “moral impairment,” Simmons served in leadership posts in multiple fraternal organizations.<sup>603</sup> Although these posts honed his charisma and charm, they did little to develop his managerial skills. This would become evident in 1915 when Simmons

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<sup>600</sup> Trelease, *White Terror; the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*, 50.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>602</sup> Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan : History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society*, 69.

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

reestablished the Ku Klux Klan alongside the Knights of Mary Phagan during a ceremony on Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Simmons' managerial bumbling would be righted through the hiring of a professional publicity and management staff, which provided him the other aspect of effective leadership. What Simmons lacked in organizational skills, Edward Clarke and Elizabeth Tyler more than made up for. By carefully managing his public appearances, scripting his speeches, and opening his eyes to recruitment opportunities, Clarke and Tyler—as the behind-the-scenes power brokers—were responsible for the popularity of the Klan and assuring its success. The duo effectively built a cult of personality around Simmons and maintained his public image as an almost supernatural entity.

Simmons, blithely unaware of his power-hungry subordinates' intentions, was deposed (through promotion to the hollow Emperor position) in 1922 by the fiery Texas dentist Dr. Hiram Wesley Evans. Evans took a more hands-on approach to running the Klan, and under his command, the organization tapered down its terrorist activity and invested more effort into political initiatives. Evans also possessed an unquantifiable appeal, demonstrated through his ability to draw over 40,000 Klansmen to Washington DC for a downtown march in 1925. Under Evans, the Klan eventually collected the support of over seventy five congressmen, numerous senators, and at least eleven state governors. Unfortunately for Simmons, another prominent leader—the previously mentioned Indiana Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson—would bring the Klan tumbling down.

Following the downfall of the ultra-powerful 1920s Klan, it would take leaders of great appeal to reunite the fractured front. The partial reunification of the 1960s Klan can be attributed to the appeal of two prominent individuals: first, Eldon Edwards and, following his death, Robert Shelton. Little is known about Edwards, other than the fact his blue-collar background as an auto painter appealed to the recruits the Klan targeted. By consolidating various local Klans, Edwards sat atop over 15,000 followers by 1958.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 66.

Stepping in after Edwards' 1960 death, Robert Shelton further unified the Klans to become the most prominent figure among at least twenty other Klan organizations. Shelton, although charismatic enough, achieved his stature in large part thanks to the complete ineptness of his rivals. One FBI report captures the state of Klan leaders during the 1960s:

Klan leaders are sadly lacking in the essential qualities of leadership. Indeed, measured by the most elementary standards of leadership ability, the leaders of today's Klan organizations are a mediocre lot...Some of the individuals who are trying to organize the Klan in various areas of the country are pathetic. One man who has tried unsuccessfully to organize a Klan group in Houston, Texas is ignorant, uneducated, and utterly lacking in organizational ability.<sup>605</sup>

Following an FBI crackdown on White Hate groups throughout the United States, Shelton became paranoid and unable to openly discuss Klan campaigns or programs for fear of informants. No longer the untouchable Klan demigod he once was, his charismatic appeal waned. Threatening his followers with truth serum, Shelton soon lost the ability to lead and rival Klan leaders found themselves in jail. By the late 1960s, the FBI had effectively destroyed the Klan by infiltrating the organization and separating the leaders from their followers—a campaign of cutting the head off the snake.

It is theoretically possible to have a successful organization under poor leadership, but examples are few and far between. Even rarer are examples of success when leaders are actually working at cross purposes to the group they profess to lead. Such was the case during the 1970–1980s. Although David Duke appeared primed to lead the Klan's resurgence, an outspoken and cunning Bill Wilkinson undercut Duke's efforts and took control of the Klan. Wilkinson's tough talk and boisterous behaviors attracted members seeking violence, but once his affiliations to the FBI were made public, the Klan fell into further disarray. As newspapers revealed Wilkinson to be a paid FBI informant, Klan members and leaders alike deserted the once-prominent organization. In fact, it is no coincidence that a large number of domestic terrorist attacks

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<sup>605</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Klan Organizations: Section III 1958-1964," page 68-69, Topical Monographs, Box 10, Record Group 65, National Archives Building, College Park MD.

during the 1980s and 1990s were attributed to *ex*-Klansmen. Klan leaders had been unable to keep these members in their orbit. After they escaped, rival groups put them to use.

### **C. SUMMARY**

Klan terrorist campaigns result from three factors: a political initiative which serves as a “spark” to the violence; the presence of safe havens and the corresponding adoption of a hierarchical organization; and proper message framing and distribution of a socially palatable message. The “spark” is beyond the control of the terrorist organization, but the final two factors and their interactions are products of a leader’s decisions. The role of leadership is to recognize when and where safe havens are available and structure the organization accordingly. Klan leaders must also understand the dominant social narratives of their time and frame a socially acceptable message which weaves Klan ideology into that narrative. My findings suggest that the presence of a widely-held ideology or the crafting of a mythologized history served as an enhancing factor for successful Klan campaigns.

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## CHAPTER IX: POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this dissertation, three commonly espoused approaches to explaining terrorism were compared side by side to determine the explanatory value of each approach. This comparative setup was not accidental. The three approaches represent different perspectives and, consequently, result in widely differing policy recommendations to curb terrorist activity. Though each approach is entirely different, each has already significantly impacted American policy for dealing with domestic terrorism.

The structural approach is most commonly used to justify long-term, multi-dimensional policies couched under the label *combating terrorism*.<sup>606</sup> Policies derived from this approach have been especially prominent in responses to global rather than domestic terrorism. In an effort to “diminish underlying causes of terrorism,” significant national resources are set aside for economic development, the strengthening of democratic governance structures, improving literacy rates, developing education systems, and/or promoting the rule of law.<sup>607</sup> Sponsorship approaches, on the other hand, urge policies designed to undercut state (or non-state) support of terrorism. Policy initiatives that fall under the term *countering state support of terrorism* focus their energies on third parties—state and non-state—that associate with terrorist organizations. In his 2005 book *Deadly Connections*, for instance, Daniel Byman highlights the dangers of state sponsorship along with the significant obstacles in ending such support, while other works focus on closing the flow of financial resources.<sup>608</sup> Finally, organizational approaches to understanding terrorism tend to advocate more offensive operations that directly target the organization and its leadership structures. Under the rubric of

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<sup>606</sup> Uses of the terms counterterrorism, countering state support of terrorism, and combating terrorism are most commonly used in the U.S. military to describe the type of operations being conducted.

<sup>607</sup> National War College, “Combating Terrorism in a Globalized World,” ed. Student Task Force on Combating Terrorism (Washington DC: National War College, May 2002). [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ndu/n02combating\\_terrorism.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ndu/n02combating_terrorism.pdf)

<sup>608</sup> Daniel Byman, *Deadly Connections : States That Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, *Terrorism Financing and State Responses : A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

*counterterrorism*, such operations place primacy on actively targeting the organization itself and are less concerned with changing the environment which may have created it. Counterterrorism strategies largely focus on disrupting or destroying a terrorist organization's command structure through "decapitation" operations, or, when waged against organizations lacking hierarchical structures, "crushing the cell."<sup>609</sup>

This project—admittedly narrowed to an exclusive focus on the Ku Klux Klan—finds value in each of these three broad policy prescriptions, but counters that certain initiatives carry greater "bang for the buck" in preventing sustained campaigns of terrorism. In an era of finite resources, it is imperative we use these limited resources appropriately. By effectively pitting resources against the most prominent factors behind reemergence of terrorism campaigns, we can significantly enhance efforts to curb future terrorism. While this author believes that the complete eradication of terrorism is a bridge too far, it should be possible, to prevent organizations from stringing together acts of terrorism into a sustained campaign. From this perspective, an environment of sporadic acts of "lone wolf terrorism"—a situation the United States is currently experiencing—has to be considered preferable to facing an organization capable of coordinating attacks in a strategic manner, launching campaigns similar to those of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1860s, 1920s, and 1950–1960s. This final chapter presents a few of the practical implications to be drawn from the dissertation's findings. This chapter also highlights a few of the potentially rewarding research avenues open to those with an interest in Ku Klux Klan terrorism.

Turning first to policy implications, Steven Walt once claimed that "policy makers pay relatively little attention to the vast theoretical literature in IR, and many scholars seem uninterested in doing policy relevant work."<sup>610</sup> This is not a critique that can be leveled at the field of terrorism studies. Following the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, an increased emphasis has been placed on research that bridges theory and

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<sup>609</sup> Michael A. Sheehan, *Crush the Cell : How to Defeat Terrorism without Terrorizing Ourselves*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008).

<sup>610</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Relationship between Theory and Policy in International Relations," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8(June 2005): 23.



practice. However, unlike the IR field, where, according to Walt, scholars seem uninterested in policy work, the field of terrorism studies faces the opposite situation.

Studies of terrorism are frequently “captured” by research funding sources, generating pressure on researchers to ensure the results of their study are in line with the desired expectations of their sponsors. It is therefore common to see terrorism studies conducted by nongovernmental organizations push economic development, education, and quality of life issues as the remedy for terrorist problems.<sup>611</sup> Conversely, military reports often focus exclusively upon manhunting, targeting training camps, and decapitation operations as the ideal remedies.<sup>612</sup> Diplomatic reports often focus upon denial of state or non-state support and the use of sanctions to discourage terrorist activity. When these reports are consolidated and given to personnel tasked to craft and implement strategy, it is the overall power of the organization delivering the reports (not necessarily the power of the arguments presented within them) that often wins the day. Terrorism studies, therefore, must keep this kind of mission creep in mind. The work produced must be policy-relevant, but also neutral. This may be especially important when focusing on domestic terrorism and striving to understand groups that promote points of view antithetical to those of the researcher.

#### **A. IT TAKES A NETWORK TO PREVENT A HIERARCHY**

The first implication of this dissertation is that the eradication of safe havens from which race based hate groups can operate is of paramount importance. This places primacy on the role of persistent conventional law enforcement efforts and requires

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<sup>611</sup> For instance see: James Clad, “U.S.A.I.D.’S Role in the War on Terrorism,” in *Issue Briefs*, ed. U.S. Agency for International Development (Washington D.C. : U.S. Agency for International Development, November 2001). Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza, *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kim Cragin and Peter Chalk, “Terrorism & Development: Using Social and Economic Development to Inhibit a Resurgence of Terrorism,” ed. Rand Corporation. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003).

<sup>612</sup> Joseph D. Celeski, “Hunter-Killer Teams:Attacking Enemy Safe Havens,” in *JSOU Report 10-1*, ed. Joint Special Operations University (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joiunt Special Operations University, January 2010); George A. Crawford, “Manhunting: Counter-Network Organization for Irregular Warfare “ in *JSOU Report* ed. Joint Special Operations University (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University, September 2009); Jr. Graham H. Turbiville, “Hunting Leadership Targets in Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorist Operations: Selected Perspectives and Experience,” in *JSOU Report 07-6*, ed. Joint Special Operations University (Hurlbuurt Field, FL: JSOU, June 2007).

responsible bottom-up initiative. One desired endstate should remain the prevention of mergers between terrorist organizations. The Klan, along with all other organizations on the contemporary radical right, remains an atomized entity. The primary emphasis of future counterterrorism against the radical right should be upon efforts which ensure it remains that way. Any activity suggesting a group merger should serve as a warning sign of danger over the horizon.

It has been said that “it takes a network to fight a network.”<sup>613</sup> Proponents of this argument usually claim that, in order to defeat a terrorist network, counterterrorist forces must develop a similar network. The operative term here is “defeat” and the accuracy of the argument depends on what that word actually means. If defeat means the complete eradication of the networked organization, then the argument is spurious. If defeat means the ability to prevent the organization from conducting systematic, sustained terrorist operations, the argument carries weight, to a point. In the realm of counterterrorism, it may be more appropriate to say “it takes a network to prevent a hierarchy.”

As this study suggests, the intensity and duration of Klan campaigns increased when there was organizational centralization, and when the Klan found a safe haven. When and where law enforcement attempted to confront the Klan, the Klan was routinely outgunned and overpowered. As decentralization then occurred, the scope of the Klan’s campaign diminished and acts of terrorism became more sporadic and less strategically focused. This, in turn, put local law enforcement units in a better position to confront and eliminate the threat posed by uncoordinated acts. That modern law enforcement officials today are confronting a heavily decentralized threat should be viewed as a positive turn of events, as the threat of a sustained terrorist campaign from such an atomized entity is minimal. This is one reason, we should continue to improve *our* counterterrorism coordination in order to prevent terrorist networks from becoming terrorist hierarchies.

A follow up question worth asking is: now the Klan has become atomized, how do we keep it this way? Professionalization and education of local police forces

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<sup>613</sup> John Arquilla et al., *The Advent of Netwar* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996); Stanley McChrystal, “It Takes a Network,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2011).

(according to an established national standard) is the first step. Linking them together in order to promote information sharing is the second. This is harder than it may sound.

Whenever terrorism is mentioned, there is an unfortunate tendency to respond with a top-down approach that focuses on killing or capturing senior leaders in the organization. Against a hierarchical organization, this may be effective. Against a decentralized one, resources are better spent elsewhere. Equipment, training, and education must be pushed downwards to the lowest level. Against a cellular organization, the beat cop is a more appropriate remedy than the FBI SWAT team.

Thus far, the United States has performed admirably in this regard, and our success is reflected in the high number of terrorist plots disrupted or foiled through conventional law enforcement methods.<sup>614</sup> Police are to be lauded for their efforts, but should not rest on their past accomplishments. Technology is making it easier for terrorist organizations to coordinate and communicate instantaneously; to almost any location around the world. Internet presence has allowed terrorists to increase levels of “virtual contact,” which, according to Hewitt, may increase levels of militancy within an organization.<sup>615</sup> To counter these trends, local law enforcement units must also take advantage of the benefits offered by technology and information sharing systems. Wiki-style intelligence reporting should be encouraged to maintain databases which are updated frequently. Such open source databases make it easier to monitor both local and regional trends in group activity, and encourage interaction between police forces that may be dealing with similar problems. Additionally, web based education systems should be promoted to increase awareness about the radical right. Finally, national pressure must be exerted upon local units to ensure standards of professionalism and ideological neutrality are maintained. Local units, in turn must keep national authorities aware of trends in racist hate group membership growth, as this serves as another indicator of potential terrorist activity.

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<sup>614</sup> Erik Dahl, “The Plots That Failed: Intelligence Lessons Learned from Unsuccessful Terrorist Attacks against the United States,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 8 (August 2011); Project, “Terror from the Right: 75 Plots, Conspiracies, and Racist Rampages since Oklahoma City.”

<sup>615</sup> Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America : From the Klan to Al Qaeda*, 46-47.

## **B. GROUP SIZE MATTERS**

If the Klan's history is anything to go by, initiating and maintaining a campaign of terrorism is a labor intensive undertaking. In each period studied, the Klan possessed a significant number of mobilized followers; for each campaign, the Klan had over 20,000 members in a single organization at its peak. This finding supports Christopher Hewitt's claims that individual levels of militancy are reinforced when immersed within a group context and the larger the group, the higher the degree of militancy generated, and the larger the group, the higher the number of terrorist acts committed.<sup>616</sup> In short, the more contact terrorist members have with one another in a group environment, the more likely they are to embark on and support a campaign.

Watchdog organizations have recently begun to sound alarms as the number of domestic militant organizations continues to rise. Unsettling as this trend may be, the relatively small size of these individual organizations limits their ability to conduct multiple operations. Rarely do these groups come together.<sup>617</sup> This is good news for modern counter terrorism officials since estimated Klan strength is currently under 5,000 members (a liberal estimate) spread between some thirty to forty different organizations.<sup>618</sup> Simply put, no Klan organization currently has the degree of mobilized manpower needed to conduct a 1860s, 1920s or 1960s-style campaign of terrorism.

Strictly from a membership perspective, the Brotherhood of Klans (BOK), Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (currently under Imperial Wizard Jeremy Parker) warrants the most concern as it remains the largest Klan organization today, and membership numbers are very hard to determine due to the group's operational security measures. The BOK has attained its size by adopting an anti-immigration recruitment pitch, one that resonates well, as the Anti-Defamation league has reported continued growth in the BOK

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> One exception to this is the annual Nordicfest, a venue which serves as a rally point for white nationalists, neo-confederates, Klansmen, neo-Nazis, and various other strands of the radical right.

<sup>618</sup> Anti-Defamation League, "About the Ku Klux Klan," [http://www.adl.org/learn/ext\\_us/kkk/default.asp?LEARN\\_Cat=Extremism&LEARN\\_SubCat=Extremism\\_in\\_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk](http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/kkk/default.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk). Accessed 15 August 2011.

since 2006.<sup>619</sup> This growth is, in no small part, owed to the leadership of Imperial Wizard Dale Fox, who died of heart attack in late 2006. His Imperial Klaliff, Jeremy Parker, assumed the mantle of BOK leader following Fox's death. Whether Parker is able to grow the Klan is debatable, but that he has vowed to do so primarily on the back of racism and anti-immigration rhetoric is of concern. Concern, in this case, does not yet warrant alarm, as the contemporary Klan must confront the operational limitations posed by its organizational design.

### C. THE LIMITS OF LEADERLESS RESISTANCE

As described by white supremacist (and former Klansman) Louis Beam, leaderless resistance is an organizational concept according to which “all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a single headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction, as would those who belong to a typical pyramidal organization.”<sup>620</sup> Beam goes on to hint that this form of “organization” is particularly effective since “the last thing Federal snoops would have, if they had any choice in the matter, is a thousand different small phantom cells opposing them.”<sup>621</sup> If federal agents are truly more concerned with a thousand different groups than a single one, then 2011 marks a troubling year. Reports indicate that domestic hate groups have recently topped 1,000, so, according to Beam's logic, America should be on the verge of right wing revolt.<sup>622</sup> But Beam—at least according to this dissertation—is wrong. Organized decentralization and the adoption of leaderless resistance indicate an overall absence of safe havens and the resultant implementation of a survival strategy as opposed to strategic preparation for a sustained terrorist campaign. Decentralization sacrifices

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<sup>619</sup> ———, “Ku Klux Klan - Recent Developments; Changes in Longstanding Groups,” *Extremism in America*(2011), [http://www.adl.org/learn/ext\\_us/kkk/changes.asp?LEARN\\_Cat=Extremism&LEARN\\_SubCat=Extremism\\_in\\_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk](http://www.adl.org/learn/ext_us/kkk/changes.asp?LEARN_Cat=Extremism&LEARN_SubCat=Extremism_in_America&xpicked=4&item=kkk). 16 August 2011.

<sup>620</sup> Louis Beam, “Leaderless Resistance,” in *Special Report on The Meeting of Christian Men Held in Estes Park, Colorado: Concerning the Killing of Vickie and Samuel Weaver by the United States Government*. Transcript of the meeting provided by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid.

<sup>622</sup> Mark Potok, “The Year in Hate and Extremism: Hate Groups Top 1000,” *Intelligence Report*, no. Issue 141 (Spring 2011).

several advantages a centralized power structure and hierarchy possess. The efficient implementation of strategy, supervision over poorly trained subordinates, and accountability are lost. What is gained are only resiliency and environmental adaptability.<sup>623</sup> By gravitating toward leaderless resistance, the Klan (and others), trade effectiveness for survivability.

As David Tucker highlights, for a decentralized organization to be effective, it must have skilled professionals at the head of each node. Skilled professionals are in short supply in the contemporary Klan, as it has neither the message to recruit already trained professionals or the training resources necessary to professionalize them in-house. Leaderless resistance is—for an unskilled Klan at least—a design born of necessity, one not designed for sustainment of systematic terrorism aimed at achieving political ends. It is a design that was forced upon them. As Sageman elaborates, the (d)evolution from hierarchy to leaderless resistance is “the natural outcome of a bottom-up mechanism of group formation in a specific environment shaped by top down counterterrorism strategy.”<sup>624</sup> In this case, the specific environment offers no safe haven, the result of an effective national strategy focused on law enforcement.

What are the policy implications? For one, the United States should recognize it is waging a successful campaign against domestic right wing terrorism. The fact that there are over 1,000 extremist groups could point to further atomization of groups rather than overall growth in terms of membership numbers. As long as these groups are composed of what Bruce Hoffman calls “amateur terrorists,” there is a diminished cause for alarm.<sup>625</sup> The alarm should ring once these groups either begin the process of professionalization, or we see a reunification of once-competing groups. One way of depict such trends is by constantly monitoring these group’s websites. Often, they will publicize mergers. This was the case when the United Northern and Southern Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (UNSK) recently merged with the Four States White Knights. From their website, the UNSK’s Imperial Wizard proudly announced:

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<sup>623</sup> Tucker, “Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy: Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong,” 4-6.

<sup>624</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad : Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, 143.

<sup>625</sup> Ian O. Lesser et al., *Countering the New Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999), 20-22.

This latest merger between the UNSK and the FSWK, we have gained some excellent and qualified members and officers. We have increased our territory and linked Klan brothers to work as one! We are now able to reach farther into the north and east and to link up territory between our northernmost Realms. What we are and have been doing is for the betterment of the white race. We fight almost insurmountable odds to win this struggle. Fight we will. Some will criticise, some will condemn our actions, some will even accuse us of unimaginable falsehoods. That is ok. Jealousy of our successes will bring out the bad in many. So be it. We will continue our battle to accomplish what is right. I, myself as well as all UNSK members really look forward to working together with our new brothers in this great struggle. Together we will be victorious.<sup>626</sup>

Following his announcement comes a discussion of how important it is to have a large, unified group that is capable of coordinated actions. Per the Imperial Wizard, “The NAACP has had great success by doing just what some in the Klans do not want to do, UNITE as one brotherhood...if we could just get the glory seekers to look past today and realize what strength and power we could wield united, this battle would be very easy.” Indeed, until Klan leaders overcome organizational issues—an unlikely occurrence—they will have to remain resigned to an overall program of leaderless resistance.

Because the Klan is stuck in its leaderless resistance bind with too few professionals in its ranks, and a recruitment message that does not resonate, it should not be considered the prevalent threat on the contemporary revolutionary right. Militia organizations—many of which host weekend training events and paramilitary camps to increase their member’s skills—are likely the most dangerous organizations on the radical right. Coordinate actions still remain an obstacle for them since most are primarily concerned with state-related issues. Militia’s local focus seems unlikely to solidify into a national campaign which would have to fall under a national hierarchy. Militias are most likely to remain regional in nature and to act in response to local federal intervention. Although we should not expect a sustained campaign, even uncoordinated acts from amateurs can now have a devastating effect.

Contemporary terrorists—Klansmen included—may not need to string acts of terrorism together into a sustained campaign to achieve their aims. Increased lethality

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<sup>626</sup> Imperial Wizard Cole Thornton, “Important Announcement: Klan Mergers,” <http://www.unskkkk.com/> Accessed 01 August 2011.

and availability of weaponry might mean a single attack can generate an effect that took past organizations a campaign to achieve. While the State Department focuses on incidents of international terrorism, reports indicate individual terrorist attacks are growing more lethal thanks to technological improvements in weaponry; we should expect future attacks will result in an even higher average per-attack body count. International attacks during the 1980s produced a casualty rate of around two casualties per attack, while terrorism of the 1990s and early 2000s averaged over eight.<sup>627</sup> Depending on the database used, that number ranges from ten to twelve during the first decade of the 21st century.<sup>628</sup> There are no indications that this trend will reverse itself over the next few years.

Thus far, the Klan continues to prefer individual attacks, relying on weapons with limited lethality. In this regard, the Klan has actually regressed from the 1960s when the organization favored dynamite and explosives, which were far more lethal than nooses, shotguns, razorblades, or e-mail threats. Of course, it wouldn't be hard to shift away from this, since fertilizer, diesel fuel, and icing sugar are relatively easy to purchase—all ingredients that could be used to manufacture very lethal explosives. Largely due to the efforts of conventional police methods and judicial prosecution, the Klan has been wary of moving beyond minor assaults and threats. Nonetheless, it is only prudent to assume there may yet be lone wolfs attacks made on behalf of race based hate groups that push domestic terrorist attacks into this realm. "Lone wolf" terrorism is never to be desired, but is at least preferable to sustained campaigns of terrorism; the lesser of two evils, if you will.

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<sup>627</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 2002*, Department of State Publication, Office of the Secretary of State (Washington DC: US Department of State, April 2003)  
<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2002/pdf/index.htm> Averages calculated by dividing the average number of casualties during the year with the average number of attacks. Results include the 9/11 attacks.

<sup>628</sup> The now-defunct Terrorism Knowledge Base puts the number at 10.89 from 2000-2005. See also John Wiggins, "Introducing the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Volume IV Issue I (2010),  
[http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php?option=com\\_rokzine&view=article&id=104](http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php?option=com_rokzine&view=article&id=104) (Accessed 10 Feb 2010)



The fear of operational alliances being formed between organizations of radically different ideological persuasions is also of growing concern.<sup>629</sup> Increasingly, as George Michael argues, groups of radically different ideological persuasions are realizing the potential gains to be made through temporary alliances against common enemies. For both jihadists and members of the radical right, this common enemy most often takes the form of Judaism. In a study of European right wing organizations, Bale and Ackerman demonstrate that radical right/Jihadi alliances have occurred, although they currently exist at the level of rhetorical and legal support for one another.<sup>630</sup> The Klan has yet to go this far, although it has demonstrated a desire to turn White Nationalism into White Internationalism by creating logistical and communications links to racists overseas and in Canada. Again, websites and communications must be monitored to provide ample warning should the Klan begin to make connections to more capable terrorist organizations.

In short, the good news is that the current state of organization on America's radical right—Leaderless Resistance—is unlikely to generate anything more sustainable than acts of lone wolf terrorism. The bad news is that these acts of terrorism can be extremely lethal and their effects can be magnified by a rapacious media. To thwart the potential for such attacks, another strategy is needed.

### **1. Fine Tuning “The War of Ideas”**

Recent studies of terrorism have begun to address the role of ideology to either help promote or retard terrorist activity. Usually focused on religion, these studies emphasize the need to wage an effective counter-ideological campaign against terrorist organizations.<sup>631</sup> Many clear-eyed assessments have advocated the need to delve deeply into the core of a group's ideology because “in order to counteract extremist's ideological

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<sup>629</sup> George Michael, *The Enemy of My Enemy : The Alarming Convergence of Militant Islam and the Extreme Right* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

<sup>630</sup> Jeffrey Bale and Gary Ackerman, “Where the Extremes (Might) Touch: The Potential for Collaboration between Islamist Terrorists and Western Right- or Left- Wing Extremists,” (START research project, publication forthcoming, 2011) <http://www.start.umd.edu/start/research/projects/>

<sup>631</sup> Muhammed Haniff Bin Hassan, “Key Considerations in Counterideological Work against Terrorist Ideology,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29(2006).

influence, [one] must engage in argument with the extremists.”<sup>632</sup> If done incorrectly, this is a recipe for disaster. I submit that who does the arguing, and how that argument is delivered are two critical, yet often overlooked, aspects to “counterideological campaigns.”

Effectively countering the messages of terrorist organizations remains critical to being able to minimize the size and scope of future race-based terrorism. Daniel Byman, for one, discusses the centrality of winning “The War of Ideas” in his 2008 work *The Five Front War*.<sup>633</sup> Byman argues that the United States must reinvest time and resources in information operations, public diplomacy, and media campaigns designed to counter terrorist narratives—a conclusion this dissertation agrees with. The findings of this dissertation also bolster his recommendation that free media outlets should be leveraged to carry counter-extremist narratives. Pushing this recommendation one step farther, I would submit that one must also consider both the mouthpiece and venue for the media outlet being leveraged.

Extremist narratives can be challenged through popular media venues. Recent examples include major motion pictures like *American History X*, a movie which details a racist skinhead’s turn away from White Nationalism.<sup>634</sup> The fact that this Academy Award-winning movie was produced by an independent, non-government source and featured an actor as talented as Edward Norton, likely did more to undercut racist recruitment messages than any government-funded educational program. In a sense, it served the same purpose but to opposite ends as *The Birth of a Nation*. Though it may speak poorly of our society that the words of an actor are likely to have a greater direct impact than those of a right wing watchdog like Morris Dees, a clever counterterrorism strategy would take advantage of this. One policy recommendation that emerges from this dissertation is an increased emphasis on working through influential social actors with no governmental affiliations to promote anti-extremist messages. The better known

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<sup>632</sup> Steven R. Corman, “Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Communicating against Terrorist Ideology,” *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 5, no. 3 (Winter 2006).

<sup>633</sup> Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War : The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2008).

<sup>634</sup> Tony Kaye, “American History X,” (United States: New Line Cinema, 1998).

and respected those social actors are by those whom extremists are likely to recruit, the more effective a counter extremist campaign would be. For instance, a counter-extremist message from Chuck Norris, Ted Nugent, or Dwayne “the Rock” Johnson would resonate far better than a message from Janeane Garofalo, Tim Robbins, or Rosie O’Donnell. The opposite, of course, would hold true for messages targeting the extreme left.

Not only do actors count, but so does the venue in which a counter narrative is delivered. Government-led initiatives through official channels—especially when government leaders are considered left-leaning—will generate backlash and fan the threat. Relying on the government bureaucracy to generate and disseminate messages with resonance and “stickiness” is a recipe for mockery and failure –Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” campaign being a good example. Although preferable to government channels, initiatives from watchdog organizations like the ADL and SPLC are still subject to criticism. For instance, following an SPLC-supported documentary entitled *Erasing Hate: The True Story of a Skinhead’s Redemption* aired on left leaning MSNBC, the response from the racist right could be summed up as “more of the same from Jewish liberals.”<sup>635</sup> Because this documentary was delivered by a (perceived) leftist source, the message was automatically mocked and swept aside in typical conspiracy-theory fashion by the radical right. Had this program been aired on the right-leaning Fox News Network, it is likely to have had a greater impact on its real target audience—recruit able youth. Or, at a minimum, it would have been harder for the radical right to dismiss.

Byman also addresses the concept of propaganda campaigns “going negative” against terrorist organizations. Byman notes the futility of trying to win a debate by being defensive. He advocates instead that counterterrorist officials change the terms, go on the offensive, and “accelerate public aversion to violence” by highlighting the negative aspects of the group in question.<sup>636</sup> This approach has proved remarkably successful against the contemporary Ku Klux Klan. In keeping with Byman’s observation that “it is easier to make your opponent hated than to make yourself loved,” the SPLC’s

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<sup>635</sup> For examples, see the “Erasing Hate” forum at Stormfront.org: <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t811401/> or comments at <http://www.occidentaldissent.com/2011/06/23/erasing-hate-byron-widner-splc-msnbc/>

<sup>636</sup> Byman, *The Five Front War : The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad*, 185-88.

Intelligence Project uses journalistic style reports to target the racist right, an approach the United States government may find impossible to adopt. Although the U.S. government may find this route blocked, other types of counterterrorism organizations may not.

#### **D. EXPANDING THE COUNTERTERRORISM MARKET**

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can serve a remarkably powerful role in countering terrorism. First, NGOs can get away with strategies that a national government cannot. NGOs can play dirty, for lack of a better term. The Southern Poverty Law Center routinely goes on the attack against radical right wing groups, promoting a three-pronged approach of “information, education, and exposure” in its fight. Along with weekly e-mail updates and website postings, the SPLC publishes *The Intelligence Report*, a journal that focuses specifically on the radical right. *The Report* “employs the techniques and forms of serious journalism, but uses them to support a specific agenda—the attempt to roll back racist hate groups and their ideologies.”<sup>637</sup> This sort of exposure, according to the lead investigator of the Intelligence Division, “is kind of like shining a light on cockroaches...under such intense scrutiny, they immediately scatter.”<sup>638</sup>

Exposure of extremist behavior works not only on extremist organizations, but on negligent law enforcement units as well. Former detective Joe Roy recalls a 1985 case from Kentucky in which the SPLC discovered a police-led Klavern called the Confederate Officers Police Squad (COPS). In this particular case, the group would meet at public facilities and members were suspected of accessing national criminal computer databases on behalf of the Klan. The SPLC became aware of the situation, and swung the “light” on the police force, ensuring that the COPS’ leader, Alex Young, was dismissed

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<sup>637</sup> Heidi Beirich and Mark Potok, “Taking on Hate: One Ngo's Strategies,” in *Hate Crimes: Understanding and Defining Hate Crime*, ed. Barbara Perry (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009).

<sup>638</sup> Joe Roy. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011.

and that the other police members' identities were exposed.<sup>639</sup> The public revelation and subsequent federal intervention to break up the wayward police force ensured elimination of a Klan safe haven.

NGOs also enjoy the distinct advantage of organizational agility and can adapt more quickly to social dynamics than can any governmental bureaucracy. NGO organizational design, as well as a wide diversity in funding sources, "does invite a sort of nimbleness, if something happens to come up, we can talk about going after some group in the morning, and we can move on it very fast shortly thereafter."<sup>640</sup> This does not happen in a government bureaucracy, where permits must be obtained, and plans are heavily screened up and down the chain of command.

The Southern Poverty Law Center has had great success as an NGO, since it also uses the legal system to effect. By 2008, the SPLC had conducted successful lawsuits against forty six individuals and nine white supremacist organizations; many of these legal battles ended in bankrupting the defendants.<sup>641</sup> Well financed by multiple donors (a factor which prevents the organization from being captured by a single source), the Center is able "to spend a dollar to every nickel we pull out of racist organizations to make them toe the line...these lawsuits have been a giant hammer."<sup>642</sup> U.S. tax codes, which encourage private donations to organizations like the SPLC or ADL, are unique, and should be retained at all costs.

## **E. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The longitudinal study of Ku Klux terrorism undertaken in this dissertation offers data missing from several longstanding academic debates in terrorism studies. Although the topics which follow were not the primary focus of this project, further investigation

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<sup>639</sup> Ibid. See also: Kathy Marks, *Faces of Right Wing Extremism* (Boston: Branden Pub. Co., 1996), 54.

<sup>640</sup> Mark Potok. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011.

<sup>641</sup> Potok, "Taking on Hate: One Ngo's Strategies," 232; Stanton, *Klanwatch : Bringing the Ku Klux Klan to Justice*.

<sup>642</sup> Joe Roy. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011

may yield significant new insights. As English-speaking Americans can easily read the writings of the Ku Klux Klan, further study of this group can easily be undertaken.

One of the more promising areas for future research focuses on bolstering the arguments made in Audrey Kurth Cronin's 2009 work *How Terrorism Ends*.<sup>643</sup> Cronin highlights six methods by which terrorist campaigns have been terminated; capturing or killing a group's leader, entry of the group into politics, successful achievement of goals, organizational implosion or loss of public support, defeat by brute force, and transition out of terrorism into other forms of violence or criminality.<sup>644</sup> Although Cronin briefly touches on the Ku Klux Klan in her footnotes and appendix, a deeper analysis of Ku Klux campaigns may point to a more nuanced understanding of campaign termination.

The Ku Klux Klan campaigns studied in this project all ended for different reasons. The 1860s campaign of terrorism ended, primarily due to the fact it had achieved its aims and restored white supremacy throughout the South (though some may argue the campaign ended due to brute repression through the Ku Klux Acts).<sup>645</sup> The 1920s campaign ended thanks to organizational infighting and overall loss of popular support following the D.C. Stephenson murder-rape scandal and the public exposure of Klan fraud and greed. The termination of the anti-Civil Rights Klan campaign can be attributed largely to the relentless, sometimes unconstitutional efforts of the FBI and its White Hate Counter Intelligence Programs (what Cronin might label a brute force counter strategy). Specific studies dedicated to understanding how each Klan campaign ended would enhance the power of Cronin's findings.

Secondly, as described throughout this work, members of the Ku Klux Klan performed acts of intensely personal violence. From whippings, to lynchings, to burnings, to castrations, to disembowelments, to beheadings, Klansmen demonstrated a propensity to inflict tremendous pain on others. Why? How can we account for this? As

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<sup>643</sup> Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends : Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

<sup>645</sup> This thesis sees the Ku Klux Acts as very effective against many of the small vigilante groups that called themselves Klans, but by the time of "brute force" repression, the Klan had already achieved its aims and its terrorism was on a downward trajectory.

I am not trained in psychology, this is an aspect not explored in this study. I anticipate future research might reveal one of three possibilities.

First, the willingness to commit such up-close-and-personal violence may owe a lot to friendship and kinship pressures for the modern Klans, since recently they've "gotten more family and neighbors than anything else."<sup>646</sup> The Klan is noted for a relatively high degree of generational turn over between mothers and fathers and their children. Violence may therefore be attributed to childhood learning and familial pressures. Kinship ties and the subsequent pressure to perform in front of family (not disappoint loved ones) may play a role in the willingness to engage in terrorism.

The second possible explanation may deal with a line of thought begun by Stanley Milgram and Hannah Arendt that promotes the idea that acts of violence can become "normalized" as part of an organization's standard operating procedures.<sup>647</sup> Adopting this line of thought, violence is a product of an organization's ideological indoctrination program and its ability to make violence appear as part of a routine. Whether true or not, the SPLC has scored several court successes by arguing along these lines. Employing the concept of "vicarious liability," lawyers from the SPLC have been able to hold the Imperial Wizards of various Klans responsible for the actions of their members.<sup>648</sup>

Third, the clearly racist nature of the Klan may hold some clues. Social psychologists have long emphasized the differences between "in-groups" and "out-groups." There may be something about differences in racial, ethnic, or religious identity that makes it easier for people to fear and dehumanize others, thus, justifying acts of violence against them. Literatures on racism, ethnic conflict, and genocide might hold useful insights for terrorism studies.

A third avenue for future research deals with the dynamics of change: what factors impact an organization's ability to innovate, adapt, or improvise. Recently, the

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<sup>646</sup> Mark Potok. Interview by Author. Tape Recording. Montgomery, AL., 25 May 2011

<sup>647</sup> Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority; an Experimental View*, [1st ed. (New York,: Harper & Row, 1974); Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem; a Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York,: Viking Press, 1963).

<sup>648</sup> Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of American Civil Liberties* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1500-03.

field of terrorism studies has started to more deeply investigate the drivers of terrorist innovation, especially as they relate to WMD development and employment. The Klan could serve as an outlier case as the group has largely failed to innovate in any significant operational manner.<sup>649</sup> Nor has the Klan appeared to adopt what many are now calling “new” forms of terrorism. Many post-modern terrorist organizations have already transitioned out of “old” forms of terrorism and have adopted what several argue to be a more lethal, more ideologically driven form of terrorism which seeks global change.<sup>650</sup> Immune to this modernizing trend, the Ku Klux Klan has remained operationally stagnant, relying on old styles of attack, weaponry, ideology, and message distribution channels. In fact, the Ku Klux Klan is typical of the American radical right, which has demonstrated an overall inability to develop, attain, or employ weapons of significant lethality or alter operational patterns in adaptive or innovative ways.<sup>651</sup> The Klan could be useful for future study as a negative case, used to test theories of innovation through an appreciation of why innovation can fail to occur.

Fourth, a reconsideration of how we code domestic terrorism could reveal some startling findings about American society. In light of the massive “War on Terrorism” the United States has undertaken since September 11<sup>th</sup>, many scholars have decried the terrorist threat—and, more specifically, the costly response to it—as overblown.<sup>652</sup> The target of these criticisms is usually our expenditures on overseas efforts, but these critiques should also call into question the appropriateness of our response to domestic

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<sup>649</sup> For example, see: Adam Dolnik, *Understanding Terrorist Innovations : Technology, Tactics and Global Trends* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007). Maria J. Rasmussen and Mohammed M. Hafez, “Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Destruction: Preconditions, Causes, and Predictive Indicators,” in *Workshop Report*, ed. DTRA Advanced Systems and Concepts Office (Ft. Belvoir, VA: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, August 2010).

<sup>650</sup> Andrew T. H. Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna, *The New Terrorism : Anatomy, Trends, and Counter-Strategies*, Regional Security Studies (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002); Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism : Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Kegley, *The New Global Terrorism : Characteristics, Causes, Controls*; Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin, “America and the New Terrorism,” *Survival* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2002).

<sup>651</sup> Paul Brister and Nina Kollars, “Pass Em’ Right: Assessing the Threat of Wmd Terrorism from America’s Christian Patriots,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 2 (May 2011).

<sup>652</sup> John E. Mueller, *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Bruce Schneier, *Beyond Fear : Thinking Sensibly About Security in an Uncertain World* (New York: Copernicus Books, 2003).



racist terrorism. As one examines our attitudes, it becomes apparent that we are caught in a paradox. As stated earlier, the study of domestic racist violence is difficult due to the fact it is coded not as terrorism, but as hate crimes. This form of criminal coding encourages bottom-up responses from local law enforcement, a wholly appropriate and highly effective strategy to prevent re-emergence of a sustained campaign. However a problem arises once you begin to look deeper into these “racial hate crimes” and see how many fall within the realm of terrorist acts.<sup>653</sup>

Our coding is both a blessing and a curse; a blessing in that we may have “lucked” into the appropriate strategy to combat terrorist activity, but a curse to those who try and track terrorist incidents. Should we code these acts correctly (and, by correctly, I mean terrorist acts as defined in this dissertation) it is highly likely the results would shift the way we understood terrorism in America. Christopher Hewitt attempted such a recoding, and came up with over 3,000 domestic terrorist acts since 1953, far more than any government organization would ever claim.<sup>654</sup>

The under reporting of certain domestic terrorist acts (racist, gay, anti-immigrant, gendered) means we may be over-reporting attacks in other realms—for instance, acts of Islamic terrorism. A recoding of acts would likely bring about a dramatic shift in counterterrorism efforts to focus on what are now referred to as “hate groups.” Although this would bring a more sensible (and honest) balance to the study of violence. Worth noting is that any recoding effort could also have an unintended consequence. Should terrorist acts be coded more accurately, it is likely domestic terrorism would merit a more robust response. This, in turn, could mean a more top-down, more direct action focused response—one this dissertation argues is inappropriate against an unskilled leaderless resistance. The paradox this presents is interesting because it suggests we have largely gotten the response right by coding these acts incorrectly. I argue, therefore, that, for now at least, we should be happy with improper coding and an effective response.

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<sup>653</sup> Again, terrorism defined as the use or threatened use of violence, directed against targets chosen for their symbolic or representative value, as a means of instilling anxiety in, transmitting one or more messages to, and thereby manipulating the perceptions and behavior of wider target audience. A triadic relationship between perpetrator, victim, and a wider target audience.

<sup>654</sup> Hewitt, *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to Al Qaeda*.

Finally, terrorism studies would benefit from a broader critique of the argument provided in this dissertation. Such a critique is both invited and welcomed. The conclusions reached here was designed to better explain a fairly narrow set of phenomena, campaigns of Ku Klux terrorism. I advocate that they be exported and tested to determine their applicability more broadly. To those looking for campaigns of domestic right wing terrorism, the 1983-1984 case of Brüder Schweigen (Silent Brotherhood or The Order) may offer a promising venue. William Potter Gale's Posse Comitatus offers a second. My conclusions may also prove useful for right wing cases abroad, as well as the study of left wing domestic terrorist organizations such as the Weathermen.

## **F. CONCLUSIONS**

The modern Ku Klux Klan is down, but far from out. If history shows us anything, it is that the Klan has a remarkable ability to emerge from periods of relative inactivity, reinvent itself, and mobilize followers to carry out sustained acts of terrorism. The fact that the contemporary Ku Klux Klan is branded as a collection of clowns and viewed as common criminals is a good thing. It is indicative of the success the American law enforcement community—in conjunction with various NGOs—has had against the hooded menace. Success, in the case of the Klan, has historically proved evanescent.

There are over two hundred active Klan groups in the United States today—one hundred and six falling within the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. In addition, there are over fifty Klan-specific websites on the Internet, a tally that does not include either the one hundred eighty seven White Nationalist or the sixty seven Neo-Nazi websites.<sup>655</sup> The overall numbers of those who call themselves Klansmen is, unfortunately, unknown. This lack of information makes it impossible to track trends in Klan growth and most estimates remain educated guesses. We must realize that it is not necessarily the diminished appeal of the Klan that prevents campaign resurgence. The Klan remains a marginal entity

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<sup>655</sup> Potok, "The Year in Hate and Extremism: Hate Groups Top 1000."

today because of the unyielding efforts of professional law enforcement organizations and the relentless work of nongovernmental organizations to prevent pockets of safe havens from reforming.

Although the United States has a relatively good story to tell with regard to race based extremist organizations, the writing of this dissertation is being concluded in the wake of the July 22, 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway. This dual-attack resulted in the deaths of over seventy people, the majority of whom were children. Although investigations into the attack are ongoing at the time of writing, initial reports paint the suspect as a right wing ideologue with a strong nationalistic bent, combined with pervasive anti-Islamic beliefs. Our hearts and thoughts should go out to those affected by the attack, while it behooves us to redouble efforts to prevent such events on American soil. It is hoped that this dissertation will assist in those efforts.

In sum, terrorism is not an “if.” It is a “when,” “how badly,” and “for how long.” This dissertation concentrated on understanding what affects the “how long” aspect of terrorist campaigns. “How badly” is determined largely by the weapons and placement available.<sup>656</sup> Deny groups any form of safe haven and you can stymie them. Deny their recruitment messages resonance and you can effectively prevent them from finding support.

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<sup>656</sup> For an expanded assessment of the chances of modern organizations waging a campaign of terrorism, see: Paul Brister, “Patriotic Enemies of the State: Assessing the Threat of America’s Revolutionary Right,” *The Homeland Security Review* 4 no. 3 (Fall 2010).

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